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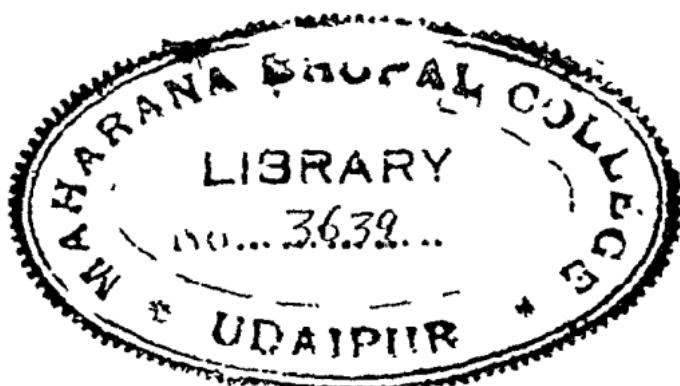


MAX BEERBOHM

From a lithograph by Sir William Rothenstein

ESSAYS BY MODERN WRITERS

EDITED BY
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though it may tell a story, describe a scene, or expound a theory, must never be didactic, hortatory or rhetorical. It must not set out to teach, or to preach, or 'to split the ears of the groundlings.' It must not be redolent of the schoolroom, the pulpit or the platform. The writer is not mounted 'on a high horse.' He is not speaking from the pontifical or professorial chair. Rather is he *en pantoufles*, talking to his readers from a comfortable seat by the fireside. He is in a communicative mood ; he takes his readers into his confidence and admits them for the time being into the inner circle of his acquaintance. He has some personal experience to communicate, some grains of wisdom to impart, some new light to throw upon life ; and in doing so, he reveals some part of himself. Above all, his aim is to please and amuse ; I do not mean merely to titillate the reader's fancy or to help him to pass agreeably an idle hour. 'The Essay should lay him under a spell with its first word, and he should awake, refreshed, only with its last. In the interval he may pass through the most varying experiences of amusement, surprise, interest, indignation ; he may soar to the heights of fantasy . . . or plunge to the depths of wisdom . . . but he must never be roused.'¹

As to its ancestry, we need go no further back than

¹ Virginia Woolf, *The Modern Essay* (slightly adapted to suit my context).

turn of expression. Many writers in other fields—poetry, fiction, history, criticism, philosophy—occasionally find the Essay a convenient literary form. Lamb, Hazlitt, Goldsmith and Macaulay are their forebears in the genealogy of letters. But for them too, even if they have no limitations imposed from outside, the Essay is, like the Sonnet, only 'a narrow plot of ground' to work in. The range of subjects may be wide, the method of treatment unrestricted, formality and convention may be banished, but the Essay must have structure, unity and coherence. It must have form ; it must, like every other work of art, have a pattern, and give a clue to the personality of the author ; and it must not be dull.

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made. It was much more to me than a mere receptacle for hats. It was my one collection, my collection of labels. Well, last week its lock was broken. I sent it to the trunk-makers, telling them to take the greatest care of it. It came back yesterday. The idiots, the accursed idiots ! had carefully removed every label from its surface. I wrote to them—it matters not what I said. My fury has burnt itself out. I have reached the stage of craving general sympathy. So I have sat down to write, in the shadow of a tower which stands bleak, bare, prosaic, all the ivy of its years stripped from it ; in the shadow of an urn commemorating nothing.

I think that every one who is or ever has been a collector will pity me in this dark hour of mine. In other words, I think that nearly every one will pity me. For few are they who have not, at some time, come under the spell of the collecting spirit and known the joy of accumulating specimens of something or other. The instinct has its corner, surely, in every breast. Of course, hobby-horses are of many different breeds ; but all their riders belong to one great cavalcade, and when they know that one of their company has had his steed shot under him they will not ride on without a backward glance of sympathy. Lest my fall be unnoticed by them, I write this essay. I want that glance.

Do not, reader, suspect that because I am choosing my words nicely, and playing with metaphor, and

hunter of big game cares not to possess the tusks, and the hunter of women covets not the photographs, of other people's victims. My collection was one of those which result from man's tendency to preserve some obvious record of his pleasures—the points he has scored in the game. To Nimrod, his tusks ; to Lothario, his photographs ; to me (who cut no dash in either of these veneries, and am not greedy enough to preserve *menus* nor silly enough to preserve press-cuttings, but do delight in travelling from place to place), my railway-labels. Had nomad been my business, had I been a commercial traveller or a King's Messenger, such labels would have held for me no charming significance. But I am only by instinct a nomad. I have a tether, known as the four-mile radius. To slip it is for me always an event, an excitement. To come to a new place, to awaken in a strange bed, to be among strangers ! To have dispelled, as by sudden magic, the old environment ! It is on the scoring of such points as these that I preen myself, and my memory is always ringing the 'changes' I have had, complacently, as a man jingles silver in his pocket. The noise of a great terminus is no jar to me. It is music. I prick up my ears to it, and paw the platform. Dear to me as the bugle-note to any war-horse, as the first twittering of the birds in the hedgerows to the light-sleeping vagabond, that cry of 'Take your seats please !' or—better still—'*En voiture !*' or '*Par-*

tenza! Had I the knack of rhyme, I would write a sonnet-sequence of the journey to Newhaven or Dover—a *sonnet* for every station one does not stop at. I await that poet who shall worthily celebrate the iron road. There is one who describes, with accuracy and gusto, the insides of engines ; but he will not do at all. I look for another, who shall show us the heart of the passenger, the exhilaration of travelling by day, the exhilaration and romance and self-importance of travelling by night.

'Paris !' How it thrills me when, on a night in spring, in the hustle and glare of Victoria, that label is slapped upon my hat-box ! Here, standing in the very heart of London, I am by one sweep of a paste-brush transported instantly into that white-grey city across the sea. To all intents and purposes I am in Paris already. Strange, that the porter does not say, 'V'là, M'sieu !' Strange, that the evening papers I buy at the bookstall are printed in the English language. Strange, that London still holds my body, when a corduroyed magician has whisked my soul verily into Paris. The engine is hissing as I hurry my body along the platform, eager to re-unite it with my soul. . . . Over the windy quay the stars are shining as I pass down the gangway, hat-box in hand. They twinkle brightly over the deck I am now pacing—amused, maybe, at my excitement. The machinery grunts and creaks. The little boat quakes in the excruciating throes of its

departure. At last! . . . One by one, the stars take their last look at me, and the sky grows pale, and the sea blanches mysteriously with it. Through the delicate cold air of the dawn, across the grey waves of the sea, the outlines of Dieppe grow and grow. The quay is lined with its blue-bloused throng. These porters are as excited by us as though they were the aborigines of some unknown island. (And yet, are they not here, at this hour, in these circumstances, every day of their lives?) These gestures! These voices, hoarse with passion! The dear music of *French* rippling up clear for me through all this hoarse confusion of its utterance, and making me happy! . . . I drink my cup of steaming coffee—true coffee!—and devour more than one roll. At the tables around me, pale and dishevelled from the night, sit the people whom I saw—years ago!—at Charing Cross. How they have changed! The coffee sends a glow throughout my body. I am fulfilled with a sense of material well-being. The queer ethereal exaltation of the dawn has vanished. I climb up into the train and dispose myself in the dun-cushioned *coupé*. ‘*Chemins de Fer de l’Ouest*’ is perforated on the white antimacassars. Familiar and strange inscription! I murmur its impressive iambs over and over again. They become the refrain to which the train vibrates on its way. I smoke cigarettes, a little drowsily, gazing out of the window at the undulating

my feet are on a hot-water tin, and my rug snugly envelops most of me. Sleeping-cars are for the strange beings who love not the act of travelling. Them I should spurn even if I could not sleep a wink in an ordinary compartment. I would liefer forfeit sleep than the consciousness of travelling. But it happens that I, in an ordinary compartment, am blest both with the sleep and with the consciousness, all through the long night. To be asleep and to *know* that you are sleeping, and to know, too, that even as you sleep you are being borne away through darkness into distance—this, surely, is to go two better than Endymion. Surely, nothing is more mysteriously delightful than this joint consciousness of sleep and movement. Pitiable they to whom it is denied. All through the night the vibration of the train keeps one-third of me awake, while the other two parts of me profoundly slumber. Whenever the train stops, and the vibration ceases, then the one-third of me falls asleep, and the other two parts stir. I am awake just enough to hear the hollow-echoing cry of ‘Crewe’ or ‘York,’ and to blink up at the green-hooded lamp in the ceiling. Maybe, I raise a corner of the blind, and see through the steam-dim window the mysterious, empty station. A solitary porter shuffles along the platform. Yonder, those are the lights of the refreshment-room, where, all night long, a barmaid is keeping her lonely vigil over the beer-handles and the Bath-buns in glass

my trunks, of suspicious grunts and glances, and of grudging hieroglyphics chalked on the slammed lids. These were things more or less painful and resented in the moment of experience, yet even then fraught with a delicious glamour. I suffered, but gladly. In the night, when all things are mysteriously magnified, I have never crossed a frontier without feeling some of the pride of conquest. And, indeed, were these conquests mere illusions? Was I not actually extending the frontiers of my mind, adding new territories to it? Every crossed frontier, every crossed sea, meant for me a definite success—an expansion and enrichment of my soul. When, after seven days and nights of sea traversed, I caught my first glimpse of Sandy Hook, was there *no* comparison between Columbus and myself? To see what one has not seen before, is not that almost as good as to see what no one has ever seen?

Romance, exhilaration, self-importance, these are what my labels symbolised and recalled to me. That lost collection was a running record of all my happiest hours; a focus, a monument, a diary. It was my humble *Odyssey*, wrought in coloured paper on pig-skin and the one work I never, never was weary of. If the distinguished Ithacan had travelled with a hat-box, how finely and minutely Homer would have described it—its depth and girth, its cunningly fashioned lock and fair lining withal! And in how interminable a torrent of hexameters

would he have catalogued all the labels on it, including those attractive views of the Hotel Circe, the Hotel Calypso, and other high-class resorts. Yet no ! Had such a hat-box existed, and had it been preserved in his day, Homer would have seen in it a sufficient record, a better record than even he could make of Odysseus' wanderings. We should have had nothing from him but the Iliad. I, certainly, never felt any need of commemorating my journeys till my labels were lost to me. And I am conscious how poor and chill is the substitute.

My collection, like most collections, began imperceptibly. A man does not say to himself 'I am going to collect' this thing or that. True, the schoolboy says so ; but his are not, in the true sense of the word, collections. He seeks no set of autobiographic symbols, for boys never look back—there is too little to look back on, too much in front. Nor have the objects of his collection any intrinsic charm for him. He starts a collection merely that he may have a plausible excuse for doing something he ought not to do. He goes in for birds' eggs merely that he may be allowed to risk his bones and tear his clothes in climbing ; for butterflies, that he may be encouraged to poison and impale ; for stamps . . . really, I do not know why he, why any sane creature, goes in for stamps. It follows that he has no real love of his collection and soon abandons it for something else. The sincere collector, how different. His hobby has

a solid basis of personal preference. Some one gives him (say) a piece of jade. He admires it. He sees another piece in a shop, and buys it ; later, he buys another. He does not regard these pieces of jade as distinct from the rest of his possessions ; he has no idea of collecting jade. It is not till he has acquired several other pieces that he ceases to regard them as mere items in the decoration of his room, and gives them a little table, or a tray of a cabinet, all to themselves. How well they look there ! How they intensify one another ! He really must get some one to give him that little pedestalled Cupid which he saw yesterday in Wardour Street. Thus awakes in him, quite gradually, the spirit of the collector. Or take the case of one whose collection is not of beautiful things, but of autobiographic symbols : take the case of the glutton. He will have pocketed many *menus* before it occurs to him to arrange them in an album. Even so, it was not until a fair number of labels had been pasted on my hat-box that I saw them as souvenirs, and determined that in future my hat-box should always travel with me and so commemorate my every darling escape.

In the path of every collector are strewn obstacles of one kind or another ; and the overleaping of them is part of the fun. As a collector of labels I had my pleasant difficulties. On any much-belabelled piece of baggage the porter always pastes the new label over that which looks most recent ; else the thing

Nor could I have done so—it would have seemed heartless—if any one had come to see me off and be agitated at parting. Therefore, I was always very careful to arrive in good time for my train, and to insist that all farewells should be made on my own doorstep.

Only in one case did I break the rule that no label must be obliterated by another. It is a long story ; but I propose to tell it. You must know that I loved my labels not only for the meanings they conveyed to me, but also, more than a little, for the effect they produced on other people. Travelling in a compartment, with my hat-box beside me, I enjoyed the silent interest which my labels aroused in my fellow-passengers. If the compartment was so full that my hat-box had to be relegated to the rack, I would always, in the course of the journey, take it down and unlock it and pretend to be looking for something I had put into it. It pleased me to see from beneath my eyelids the respectful wonder and envy evoked by it. Of course, there was no suspicion that the labels were a carefully formed collection ; they were taken as the wild-flowers of an exquisite restlessness, of an unrestricted range in life. Many of them signified beautiful or famous places. There was one point at which Oxford, Newmarket, and Assisi converged, and I was always careful to shift my hat-box round in such a way that this purple patch should be lost on none of my fellow-passengers.

The many other labels, English or alien, they, too, gave their hints of a life spent in fastidious freedom, hints that I had seen and was seeing all that is best to be seen of men and cities and country-houses. I was respected, accordingly, and envied. And I had keen delight in this ill-gotten homage. A despicable delight, you say ? But is not yours, too, a fallen nature ? The love of impressing strangers falsely, is it not implanted in all of us ? To be sure, it is an inevitable outcome of the conditions in which we exist. It is a result of the struggle for life. Happiness, as you know, is our aim in life ; and alas ! for every one of us it is the things he does not possess which seem to him most desirable, most conducive to great bliss. For instance, the poor nobleman covets wealth, because wealth would bring him comfort, whereas the nouveau riche covets a pedigree, because a pedigree would make him *of* what he is merely *in*. The rich nobleman who is an invalid covets health, on the assumption that health would enable him to enjoy his wealth and position. The rich, robust nobleman hankers after an intellect. The rich, robust, intellectual nobleman is (be sure of it) as discontented, somehow, as the rest of them. No man possesses all he wants. No man is ever quite happy. But, by producing an impression that he *has* what he wants—in fact, by ‘bluffing’—a man can gain some of the advantages that he would gain by really having it. Thus, the poor nobleman

can, by concealing his 'balance' and keeping up appearances, coax more or less unlimited credit from his tradesmen. The nouveau riche, by concealing his origin and trafficking with the College of Heralds, can intercept some of the homage paid to high birth. And (though the rich nobleman who is an invalid can make no tangible gain by pretending to be robust, since robustness is an advantage only from within) the rich, robust nobleman can, by employing a clever private secretary to write public speeches and magazine articles for him, intercept some of the homage which is paid to intellect.

These are but a few typical cases, taken at random from a small area. But consider the human race at large, and you will find that 'bluffing' is indeed one of the natural functions of the human animal. Every man pretends to have what (not having it) he covets, in order that he may gain some of the advantages of having it. And thus it comes that he makes his pretence, by force of habit, even when there is nothing tangible to be gained by it. The poor nobleman wishes to be thought rich even by people who will not benefit him in their delusion ; and the nouveau riche likes to be thought well-born even by people who set no store on good birth ; and so forth. But pretences, whether they be an end or a means, cannot be made successfully among our intimate friends. These wretches know all about us —have seen through us long ago. With them we

are, accordingly, quite natural. That is why we find their company so restful. Among acquaintances the pretence is worth making. But those who know anything at all about us are apt to find us out. That is why we find acquaintances such a nuisance. Among perfect strangers, who know nothing at all about us, we start with a clean slate. If our pretence do not come off, we have only ourselves to blame. And so we 'bluff' these strangers, blithely, for all we are worth, whether there be anything to gain or nothing. We all do it. Let us despise ourselves for doing it, but not one another.

By which I mean, reader, do not be hard on me for the show I made of my labels in railway-carriages. After all, the question is whether a man 'bluff' well or ill. If he brag vulgarly before strangers, away with him ! by all means. He does not know how to play the game. He is a failure. But, if he convey subtly (and therefore successfully) the fine impression he wishes to convey, then you should stifle your wrath, and try to pick up a few hints. When I saw my fellow-passengers eyeing my hat-box, I did not, of course, say aloud to them, 'Yes, mine is a delightful life ! Any amount of money, any amount of leisure ! And what's more, I know how to make the best use of them both !' Had I done so, they would have immediately seen through me as an impostor. But I did nothing of the sort. I let my labels proclaim distinction for me, quietly, in their

own way. And they made their proclamation with immense success. But there came among them, in course of time, one label that would not harmonise with them. Came, at length, one label that did me actual discredit. I happened to have had influenza, and my doctor had ordered me to make my convalescence in a place which, according to him, was better than any other for my particular condition. He had ordered me to Ramsgate, and to Ramsgate I had gone. A label on my hat-box duly testified to my obedience. At the time, I had thought nothing of it. But, in subsequent journeys, I noticed that my hat-box did not make its old effect, somehow. My fellow-passengers looked at it, were interested in it ; but I had a subtle sense that they were not revering me as of yore. Something was the matter. I was not slow in tracing what it was. The discord struck by Ramsgate was the more disastrous because, in my heedlessness, I had placed that ignoble label within an inch of my *point d'appui*—the trinity of Oxford, Newmarket and Assisi. What was I to do ? I could not explain to my fellow-passengers, as I have explained to you, my reason for Ramsgate. So long as the label was there, I had to rest under the hideous suspicion of having gone to Ramsgate for pleasure, gone of my own free will. I did rest under it during the next two or three journeys. But the injustice of my position maddened me. At length, a too obvious sneer on the face of a fellow-

passenger steeled me to a resolve that I would, for once, break my rule against obliteration. On the return journey, I obliterated Ramsgate with the new label, leaving visible merely the final TE, which could hardly compromise me.

Steterunt those two letters because I was loth to destroy what was, primarily, a symbol for myself: I wished to remember Ramsgate, even though I had to keep it secret. Only in a secondary, accidental way was my collection meant for the public eye. Else I should not have hesitated to deck the hat-box with procured symbols of Seville, Simla, St. Petersburg and other places which I had not (and would have liked to be supposed to have) visited. But my collection was, first of all, a private autobiography, a record of my scores off Fate; and thus, positively to falsify it would have been for me as impossible as cheating at 'Patience.' From that to which I would not add I hated to subtract anything—even Ramsgate. After all, Ramsgate was not London; to have been in it was a kind of score. Besides, it had restored me to health. I had no right to rase it utterly.

But such tenderness was not my sole reason for sparing those two letters. Already I was reaching that stage where the collector loves his specimens not for their single sakes, but as units in the sum-total. To every collector comes, at length, a time when he does but value his collection—how shall I

say?—collectively. He who goes in for beautiful things will hereafter value his every acquisition not for its beauty, but because it enhances the worth of the rest. Likewise, he who goes in for autobiographic symbols will begin to care not for the symbolism of another event in his life, but just for the addition to the objects already there. He begins to value every event less for its own sake than because it swells his collection. Thus there came for me a time when I looked forward to a journey less because it meant movement and change for myself than because it meant another label for my hatbox. A strange state to fall into? Yes, collecting is a mania, a form of madness. And it is the most pleasant form of madness in the whole world. It can bring us nearer to real happiness than can any form of sanity. The normal, eclectic man is never happy, because he is always craving something of another kind than what he has got. The collector, in his mad concentration, wants only more and more of what he has got already; and what he has got already he cherishes with a passionate joy. I cherished my gallimaufry of rainbow-coloured labels almost as passionately as the miser his hoard of gold. Why do we call the collector of current coin a 'miser'? Wretched? He? True, he denies himself all the reputed pleasures of life; but does he not do so of his own accord, gladly? He sacrifices everything to his mania; but that merely proves

how intense his mania is. In that the nature of his collection cuts him off from all else, he is the perfect type of the collector. He is above all other collectors. And he is the truly happiest of them all. It is only when, by some merciless stroke of Fate, he is robbed of his hoard, that he becomes wretched. Then, certainly, he suffers. He suffers proportionately to his joy. He is smitten with sorrow more awful than any sorrow to be conceived by the sane. I, whose rainbow-coloured hoard has been swept from me, seem to taste the full savour of his anguish.

I sit here thinking of the misers who, in life or in fiction, have been despoiled. Three only do I remember : Melanippus of Sicyon, Pierre Baudouin of Limoux, Silas Marner. Melanippus died of a broken heart. Pierre Baudouin hanged himself. The case of Silas Marner is more cheerful. He, coming into his cottage one night, saw, by the dim light of the hearth, that which seemed to be his gold restored, but was really nothing but the golden curls of a little child, whom he was destined to rear under his own roof, finding in her more than solace for his bereavement. But then, he was a character in fiction : the other two really existed. What happened to him will not happen to me. Even if little children with rainbow-coloured hair were so common that one of them might possibly be left on my hearth-rug, I know well that I should not feel

recompensed by it, even if it grew up to be as fascinating a paragon as Eppie herself. Had Silas Marnier really existed (nay, even had George Eliot created him in her maturity) neither would he have felt recompensed. Far likelier, he would have been turned to stone, in the first instance, as was poor Niobe when the divine arrows destroyed that unique collection on which she had lavished so many years. Or maybe, had he been a very strong man, he would have found a bitter joy in saving up for a new hoard. Like Carlyle, when the MS. of his masterpiece was burned by the housemaid of John Stuart Mill, he might have begun all over again, and builded a still nobler monument on the tragic ashes.

That is a fine, heartening example ! I will be strong enough to follow it. I will forget all else. I will begin all over again. There stands my hat-box ! Its glory is departed, but I vow that a greater glory awaits it. Bleak, bare and prosaic it is now, but—ten years hence ! Its career, like that of the Imperial statesman in the moment of his downfall, ‘is only just beginning.’

There is a true Anglo-Saxon ring in this conclusion. May it appease whomever my tears have been making angry.

From *Yet Again.*

ON LIVING AGAIN

BY ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH

A LITTLE group of men, all of whom had achieved conspicuous success in life, were recently talking after dinner round the fire in the smoking-room of a London club. They included an eminent lawyer, a politician whose name is a household word, a well-known divine, and a journalist. The talk traversed many themes, and arrived at that very familiar proposition : If it were in your power to choose, would you live this life again ? With one exception the answer was a unanimous 'No.' The exception, I may remark, was not the divine. He, like the majority, had found one visit to the play enough. He did not want to see it again.

The question, I suppose, is as old as humanity. And the answer is old too, and has always, I fancy, resembled that of our little group round the smoking-room fire. It is a question that does not present itself until we are middle-aged, for the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts, and life then stretches out in such an interminable vista as to raise no question of its recurrence. It is when you have reached the top of the pass and are on the downward

slope, with the evening shadows falling over the valley and the church tower and with the end of the journey in view, that the question rises unbidden to the lips. The answer does not mean that the journey has not been worth while. It only means that the way has been long and rough, that we are footsore and tired, and that the thought of rest is sweet. It is Nature's way of reconciling us to our common lot. She has shown her child all the pageant of life, and now prepares him for his 'patrimony of a little mould'—

Thou hast made his mouth
Avid of all dominion and all mightiness,
All sorrow, all delight, all topless grandeurs,
All beauty, and all starry majesties,
And dim transtellar things ;—even that it may,
Filled in the ending with a puff of dust,
Confess—'It is enough.'

Yes, it is enough. We accept the verdict of mortality uncomplainingly—nay, we would not wish it to be reversed, even if that were possible.

Now this question must not be confounded with that other, rather foolish, question, 'Is Life worth living?' The group round the smoking-room fire would have answered that question—if they had troubled to answer it at all—with an instant and scornful 'Yes.' They had all found life a great and splendid adventure; they had made good and wholesome use of it; they would not surrender a

moment of its term or a fragment of its many-coloured experience. And that is the case with all healthy-minded people. We may, like Job, in moments of depression curse the day when we were born ; but the curse dies on our lips. Swift, it is true, kept his birthday as a day of mourning ; but no man who hates humanity can hope to find life durable, for the measure of our sympathies is the measure of our joy in living.

Even those who take the most hopeless view of life are careful to keep out of mischief. A friend of mine told me recently of a day he had spent with a writer famous for the sombre philosophy of his books. In the morning the writer declared that no day ever passed in which he did not wish that he had never been born ; in the afternoon he had a most excellent opportunity of being drowned through some trouble with a sailing boat, and he rejected the chance with almost pathetic eagerness. Yet I dare-say he went on believing that he wished he had never been born. It is not only the children who live in the world of ' Let us make pretend.'

No, we are all glad to have come this way once. It is the thought of a second journey over the same ground that chills us and gives us pause. Sometimes you will hear men answer, ' Yes, if I could have the experience I have had in this life.' By which they mean, ' Yes, if I could come back with the certainty of making all the short cuts to happiness that I now

see I have missed.' But that is to vulgarise the question. It is to ask that life shall not be a splendid mystery, every day of which is

an arch wherethrough
Gleams the untravelled world ;

but that it shall be a thoroughly safe three per cent. investment into which I can put my money with the certainty of having a good time—all sunshine and no shadows. But life on those terms would be the dreariest funeral march of the marionettes. Take away the uncertainty of life, and you take away all its magic. It would be like going to the wicket with the certainty of making as many runs as you liked. No one would trouble to go to the wicket on those preposterous terms. It is because I may be out first ball or stay in and make a hundred runs (not that I ever did any such heroic thing) that I put on the pads with the feverish sense of adventure. And it is because every dawn breaks as full of wonder as the first day of creation that life preserves the enchantment of a tale that is never told.

Moreover, how would experience help us? It is character which is destiny. If you came back with that weak chin and flickering eye, not all the experience of all the ages would save you from futility.

No, if life is to be lived here again it must be lived on the same unknown terms in order to be worth living. We must come, as we came before, like

wanderers out of eternity for the brief adventure of time. And, in spite of all the fascinations of that adventure, the balance of our feeling is against repeating it. For we know that every thing that makes life dear to us would have vanished with all the old familiar faces and happy associations of our former pilgrimage, and there is something disloyal in the mere thought of coming again to form new attachments and traverse new ways. Holmes once wrote a poem about being ‘Homesick in heaven’ ; but it would be still harder to be homesick on earth —to be wandering about among the ghosts of old memories, and trying to recapture the familiar atmosphere of things. We should make new friends ; but they would not be the same. They might be better ; but we should not ask for better friends : we should yearn for the old ones.

There is a fine passage in Guido Rey’s noble book on the ‘Matterhorn’ which comes to my mind as a fitting expression of what I think we feel. He was on his way to climb the mountain, when, on one of its lower slopes, he saw standing lonely in the evening light the figure of a grey-headed man. It was Whymper, the conqueror of the Matterhorn—Whymper grown old, standing there in the evening light and gazing on the mighty rock that he had vanquished in his prime. His climbing days were done, and he sought no more victories on the mountains. He had had his day and was content to stand

afar off, alone with his memories, leaving the joy of battle to the young and the ardent. There was not one of those memories that he would be without—save, of course, that terrible experience in the hour of his victory over the Matterhorn. But had you asked him if he was still avid for those topless grandeurs and starry majesties he would have said, ‘It is enough.’

From *Pebbles on the Shore*.

take for their living in the days before steam. The new-made husband and head of a house, released from his desk in a public office, will labour absorbedly from morning until dewy eve to put the attic in order or get the whole of the tool-shed painted while yet it is light, proud and happy as Pepys when after a day of such application he put the glorious result down in his diary, adding—lest pride should grow sinful—‘ Pray God my mind run not too much upon it.’

Is it, then, mere change of work that makes the best holiday? Scarcely. The master cotton-spinner would not find it sport to spend his August in ruling a dye-works. There is no rush of Civil Service clerks for a month’s diversion, each year, among the ledgers of joint-stock banks in the City. A doubtful legend, as we all know, reports that if ever one of the old London drivers of horsed ‘buses had a holiday—and even this is uncertain—he spent it in driving his wife and himself out into the country in a small trap. Suppose it was true. Yet even then, mark you, a small trap of the period had only one horse. And that leads to the point. What most charms us as play is not merely some other kind of work than our own. It is some kind more elementary.

Not that we want to bestow on this holiday work anything less than the whole of our energy. On our Bank Holidays do not we bend up every corporal agent to the sport? We sweat in the eye of Phœbus;

we take it out of ourselves, yea, all of it. Just what we want, in our hearts, is to put forth our powers, for once in a while, upon some occupation in which our endeavour shall go, or at least seem to go, a mighty long way, and not go it in some direction which we have never intended. Most of our working time is spent in making for some distant objective — fame, or the good of our kind, or a golden wall or spire, or some other estimable thing. But the line of approach to these goals is not very clear, and then there is always the plaguy chance that, if ever we get there, the gold may turn out to be gilt. If we be parsons, Heaven knows when we shall have the parish reasonably sober. If we be doctors, perhaps casting out one bacterial devil by letting another loose at it, how can we feel secure against making some deadly slip in the dark, like the man who let the first rabbit loose in Australia? In any kind of responsible work, be it only the work of rearing a family decently well, the way is dark and we are far from home. That is the real curse of Adam; not the work in itself but the worry and doubt of ever getting it done; perhaps the doubt, also, whether, after all, it ought to be done, or done at the price. All your working year you chase some phantom moment at which you might fairly say 'Now I am there.' Then Easter comes; you sail your own boat through a night of dirty weather from the Mersey to the Isle of Man; and, as you lower sail

in Douglas harbour, you *are* there ; no phantom this time ; the curse of Adam is taken clean off you, at any rate for that morning. Or those seeds that you sowed in the back garden on that thrilling Saturday evening amaze and exalt you by coming up, and you learn in your proper person what the joys of discovery and creation are ; you have, so far, succeeded in life and done what it piqued you to do in this world. All play, of course, and the victory tiny. Still, on its own scale and for its miniature lifetime, the little model is perfect ; the humble muddler has come nearer than anything else is likely to bring him to feeling what the big triumphs of human power must taste like.

II

Man's job on the earth seems to be always becoming more intricate and advanced. Quite early he has to plunge on and on into deepening forests of complexity as his youth penetrates with uncertain feet the central wilds and dark places of algebra-books. The toughness of our task, as compared with that of a hen, is said to be roughly indicated by the contrast between the preparation required for each ; the hen is fairly ripe for its labours the day it is born ; a man is by no means always efficient after he has afforded employment to a cohort of nurses, governesses, schoolmasters, tutors and professors for more than a score of years. And so, as we pro-

ceed with this obscure and intractable undertaking, we dearly like, on our days off, to turn back and do over again, for the fun and easiness of the thing, what we or others really had to do, for dear life, in the infancy of the race.

When Easter releases the child, in any provincial suburb, from his inveterate bondage to grammar and sums, you will see him refreshing himself with sportive revivals of one of the earliest anxieties of man. Foraging round like a magpie or rook, he collects odd bits of castaway tarpaulin and sacking, dusters, old petticoats, broken broom-sticks and fragments of corrugated iron. Assembling these building materials on some practicable patch of waste grass, preferably in the neighbourhood of water, he raises for himself a simple dwelling. The blessing of a small fire crowns these provisions for domestic felicity, and marvellous numbers of small persons may be seen sitting round these rude hearths, conversing with the gravity of Sioux chieftains or, at a menace of rain, packing themselves into incredibly small cubic spaces of wigwam.

Houses, of course, have been somewhat scarce in late years. Parents, no doubt, have shaken their heads over the dearth, and this may have reinforced in their young the primitive human craving to start by getting a roof over one's head. The war, too, with all its talk of tent and hut, dug-out and bivouac, may have fortified the old impulse. Still, it is there,

always and anyhow. It is the holiday impulse of self-rescue from that strange and desolating blindness which comes of knowing things too well and taking them as matters of course. Most of us have long become so used to the idea of living in a house that the idea has lost its old fascination. Of course we do value a house, in a way. That is, we are sorely put out if we cannot obtain one. And, having obtained it, we feel deeply wronged if we have forgotten the latch-key some night and cannot get in. But sheer delight in the very notion of a house, the chuckling, thigh-slapping triumph of early man when first he built one—this has died down in us, just as has the grinning and capering glee of the same pioneer when he got the first fire to kindle.

In the orally transmitted Scriptures of some of the Australian blacks the Creator, Pund-jel, was so well pleased when he had fashioned the first man out of clay and bark that he danced for joy round this admirable piece of handiwork. Even the more staid Jehovah of our own Book of Genesis went on from finding his earlier products ‘good’ to find the whole week’s work ‘very good,’ the exultant complacency of the artist increasing, as it always does, *pari passu* with the activity of his invention. Man has been proceeding, ever since, with the work that was thus started. A house, a bed, a wheel, a boat, a plough—rapturously must his mind have capered, like Pund-

jel's, round each of these happy masterpieces when it was new. So, too, would it caper now, but for some pestilent bar that familiarity interposes between us and the deft miracles of gumption that make us able to sit and look out, dry and warm, half an inch from a tempest of snow, and lie ensconced in tiny cubes of snug stillness hoisted up as high as the top of a tree amidst the raving and whining of violent winter winds.

In poets, perhaps, and in a few other people doubly charged with relish for all the contents of existence, some traces of that jubilation persist. Any child who is happily placed and wisely reared has his chance of reviving it for himself. There come to him exultant ecstasies of climbing in trees with the zest of the first tree-dweller in his ancient pedigree ; he huddles in holes that he has digged for himself with all the gusto and pride of a pioneer cave-man ; then from the joys of the domestic cave he passes on to the sweets of the original ramshackle tent, symbol of the opening of the nomad stage in the life of his kind. Packed as miraculously tight into his own small life as a hyacinth, flower and leaves and all, is compressed in the bulb, there unfolds itself for his diversion a stirring recapitulation of the adventurous life of mankind on the earth : he re-lives with relish the whole career of his race ; he has been with other ape-like figures in the upper boughs of trees and has shivered with delicious

apprehension in caverns of the earth, undergoing a sort of painless return of the terrors of naked savages crouched in imperfect cover, with roaring beasts ranging the forests without. No wonder the little ragged boys are both happy and grave as they sit in pow-wow at the door of a tabernacle composed of two aged sacks, or lean upon their one-foot-high stockade of bits of turf and scan the enigmatic horizon.

III

All fortunate holiday travel, like all good recovery after illness, is a renewal of youth. All the rest of the year your youth is running down within you. The salt of living—not of success and arrival but of mere living, the conscious adventure—is losing its savour ; insensibly the days are coming near ‘when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.’ We may be toiling or fussing away in the van of some sort of big human march. And quite right too of course ; marches have to go on ; there is no dropping out of the column ; on active service you cannot resign. And yet it may grow hard to keep your zest for the simpler, ruder, basic good things of existence while fingering some of its latest subtleties. What fun the alphabet was, once ! But you almost forget, in your present wrestlings with words of six syllables. The rooms where you work are so well heated, without any effort of yours, that willy-nilly you come to forget what the joy of repelling cold is ; you may

have to sit for so much of the day that the rapture of rest after real fatigue of the body becomes merely words, a thing in a book, not an object of sense ; streets and trains and cars are rendered, by some impersonal forces unknown, so utterly safe that safety becomes a mere matter of course, with no power to rouse or astonish ; meals appear with an unfailing air of automatism, so that the start of delight with which, in another state of yourself, you look upon a laid dinner-table, with all its centuries of accumulations of 'cute dodges for refining the use of pasture, does not visit you now ; even that divine and yet most human contrivance, a bed, the ultimate product of tens of thousands of years of man's nightly consideration of means for being still snugger next night, may lose its power of making you chuckle as you plunge in between the sheets.

But then come holidays. They soon put things to rights. In his story of Marius, Walter Pater describes his hero's recovery of a lost interest in common things—household customs, the daily meals, just the eating of ordinary food at appointed and recurrent times : Marius awoke to regained enjoyment of 'that poetic and, as it were, moral significance which surely belongs to all the means of daily life, could we but break through the veil of our familiarity with things by no means vulgar in themselves.' Some such retransfiguration of things that had sunk into triteness blesses the fortunate holiday-maker.

The sandwiches eaten with grimy fingers at the top of the Napes on Great Gable attain a strange quality of pleasantness ; the meal, like every meal that has not somehow gone wrong, achieves a touch of sacramental significance ; and the subsequent smoke is the true pipe of peace once more, redolent of spiritual harmonies and romantic dreams. Bodily safety, a treasure charmless to the mind in ordinary life, regains the piquant value of a thing that will not just come of itself ; it has to be wooed ; the winning of it depends on the right exertion of some faculty not too perplexing to be joyous—the yachtsman's handling of his craft, the climber's hold on rock, the swimmer's sureness of himself across half a mile of deep water. Best of all when the security of every one in a party depends upon the alertness and fitness of each of the others. Then you revivify all human comradeship too ; it comes back cleared of the blur that may have dulled your sense of it at home, where human interdependence may be so intricate and so incessant and often so muddled up with annoying circumstances that it seems more tiresome than real, like a virtue vulgarised by the stale eulogistic phrasing of rhetoricians.

In such a sport as mountaineering, vicissitudes of heat and cold are again, for a few make-believe hours, the hazards that they must have been to the houseless man of the prime ; sunset and dawn are recharged with the freshness and wonder that they

might have had on the morning and the evening of the first day. Rightly to perceive a thing, in all the fullness of its qualities, is really to create it. So, on perfect holidays, you re-create your world and sign on again as a pleased and enthusiastic member of the great air-ship's company. The word recreation seems to tell you as much, and I suppose the old poets hinted it too in their tale of Antæus, whose strength would all come back with a rush whenever he got a good kiss of his mother the earth.

IV

Something in modern ways of work seems to make some little nip of artificial excitement, of one sort or another, an object of sharper desire than it was. Labour in great mills and workshops and large counting-houses is probably healthier now, for the body, than ever before. Yet there seems to have been some loss for the mind and the spirits. Perhaps it comes of a cause that cannot be helped any more than an army can help the defects of a landscape through which it must pass in the course of a long march. The cause, I suppose, is the inevitable minute subdivision of labour. To put it roughly, the old-time workman made a thing ; the modern workman only gives a passing touch to a thing while it is being made. Forty years ago a small Thames boat-builder, working alone in his shed, would make a whole boat, of a very beautiful build, by himself,

from its keel to the last lick of its varnish. He got his share—and you could see him get it if you were friends with him—of that joy and excitement of creation in which healthy children at play are at one with inventors and discoverers. The passing of the greater part of that happy excitement away from so many modern modes of manufacture has been a real Fall of Man. It has gone some way to make work what it is said to have been to Adam after his misfortune—a thing to be got through and borne with, because you cannot go on living upon any other terms.

The thing has gone so far that at any trade-union meeting to-day you would not expect to hear a word implying that the work its members do is anything but a mere cause of weariness, only made endurable by pay ; this although all work which has not somehow gone wrong is like the work of a normal artist—a thing for which the artist means to get properly paid if he can, but also a thing which he would go on doing anyhow, whether any one paid him or not. You will see men fairly rushing away from the factory gate to get a little excitement out of a bet or a League match. Many of them, and some of the best, may be unconsciously looking for something to put in the place of that satisfying stir of heart and mind which visits every good craftsman during his exhilarating struggle with a testing piece of work. *Their* work has failed to yield it. They hunt for substitutes for

the lost joys of their trade, and of all substitutes an active holiday is the best. The finer or longer holiday a man or woman can get whose work is an eternal picking-up of pins or dipping of match-heads in phosphorus, the greater their chance of remaining decently human. Some inarticulate sense of this may be showing itself in the almost frenzied grasp which new millions are making now at every possible holiday—not in laziness but in a sane instinctive effort to keep the salt of their existence from losing its savour.

v

One special kind of holiday deserves a note to itself. The military experience of the nation went to show that one of the best days of a leave, during the war, was the day before you went. And then it sometimes happened, for reasons of State, that you did not go, after all. Still, you had had your hour. *Pro tem.*, at any rate, you had divinely lived. To put it at the lowest, you had, like the three famous sportsmen of song, powler't up and down a bit and had a rattling day with the home railway timetables, tasting, as you looked up train by train, the delights of passing the hedged closes of tasselled hops in Kent or the blue bloom of the moors about your home in Yorkshire. Well, if that was better than nothing, why not go in for such fragments of joy, on a system?

The plan is to say to yourself in a firm tone that on such or such a date you are going to some longed-for place ; then to make all the fond mental preparations of good travellers, tracking every mile on the map, forming conjectural visions of what you would see from this point and from that ; and then, at the last moment, not to go at all, being quite unable to afford it, as you had always known. One solid merit in this sort of travel is that the fares cannot be raised against you, as has so often and so lamentably been done to the impoverishment or immobilisation of those who travel in the flesh. Another advantage is that it overcomes the difficulty which so many of us find in leaving our work for more than a month, perhaps even a fortnight, at a time. From the journey over the Andes, for instance, from the Argentine to the Chilean coast, most of us are inexorably barred by iron laws of time, space and finance. Yet is it evidently a delectable passage ; and by a proper use of South American time-tables you can adjust consummately the timing of your transit across the spacious place of origin of bully beef to the iced spike of Aconcagua or the snowy dome of Chimborazo ; freely you choose the hour at which it will give you the most exquisite vibrations to stare for the first time at the Pacific ; sagaciously you distribute your time between the Arctic, the sub-Arctic, the temperate, the sub-tropical and the tropical zones of the rapid western slope, right down

IN PRAISE OF MISTAKES

BY ROBERT LYND

THERE has been a heavy shower of letters in *The Times* about the mistakes made by famous novelists. Correspondents have written to the Editor pointing out such things as that Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith blundered in making one of her characters send his son to school from Kent to Shrewsbury in the early eighteenth century ; that Walter Besant erred in making the hero of one of his stories dig for oil with a spade and dig triumphantly ; that William Le Queux was guilty of a geographical lie in referring to the 'snow-crowned crest' of a hill two thousand feet high in the tropics ; that some other novelist erroneously described the daughter of a rural dean as having 'been brought up in the quiet seclusion of the Deanery' ; that a writer of detective stories misrepresented 'the relative positions of a chief constable and an inspector of the C.I.D.' , and so on, and so on. The correspondence was extremely interesting, but, as one read it, one became more and more astonished at the weakness of the case made out against the novelists by the intelligentsia of the nation. Even the most pugnacious lawyer, if so

poor a case had been put into his hands, would have advised his client not to bring it into court. At the end of the indictment the novelist might triumphantly have replied to his accusers in the words of Lord Clive: 'By God, Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation.' For if this is the worst that can be said against novelists they must be wizards of accuracy compared with such professed dealers in facts as biographers and historians.

I confess I am myself so nervous a lover of accuracy that, when I have written an article, I consult the encyclopaedia to make sure that I have not erred on some such matter as the sun's rising in the east or the Pole Star's not being one of the planets. Often, awaking out of a dream in the small hours, I have broken into a sweat of fear lest, in an article that had already gone to press, I had put some wretched poet that nobody ever reads into the wrong century. Worst of all, having described some church ceremony, and having necessarily used such words as nave, transept, chancel, choir, chasuble, cope, alb and clerestory, I pass wakeful hours in the apprehension that I may have placed the clerestory round a bishop's shoulders or referred to an alb as a kind of hat. These fears, I admit, are absurd. Nobody but a bigot cares twopence what a clerestory is, but everybody likes to see the word in print, and 'chasuble' is as impressive a word in a sentence whether the

writer or the reader thinks it is a large silver cup—I like to think of it as a cup—or a piece of clothing. There are a great many words that mean nothing to the ordinary reader and that yet everybody reads with pleasure—words that we love not for their sense but for their appeal to our senses. Who ever cares whether a poet is accurate or not when he uses the word ‘chrysoprase’ or ‘beryl’ or ‘sardonyx’ or ‘chalcedony’? Yet who that has ever been young has not admired these words though they conveyed nothing except a blur of beauty to his intelligence? The most incompetent jeweller’s assistant in the world could probably correct a thousand errors in the poets in their references to precious stones, just as the editor of the *Tailor and Cutter* once a year exposes the errors of Mr. Augustus John, Sir William Orpen and the most eminent painters of our time in the gents’ suitings with which they clothe their sitters. But the poet, with all his mistakes, is telling us something that the jeweller’s assistant with all his accuracy cannot tell us. As one grows older, no doubt, one cares less for the rarer kind of jewellery in poetry. Still, so long as one likes the sound of ‘chrysoberyl,’ one does not really care whether a poet who uses the word knows what a chrysoberyl is or is not.

The truth is, the only fatal error in a writer is to be uninteresting. Even the historian will be forgiven all other errors but that. The inaccuracies of

Froude have been laughed at for three generations, but we can still read him more easily than we can read most of the historians who have corrected him. I do not wish to suggest that a writer need be at no pains to verify his facts. That would obviously be a vile doctrine, and, if it were acted upon, would make the writing of history a frivolous pursuit. At the same time, we instinctively concede to every writer a margin of error, and we no more expect him to be perfect in his information than in his character. There have been few writers who have not perpetrated errors that had to be amended by their editors. Shakespeare blundered in chronology and geography, Scott made the sun rise on the wrong side of the world, Lamb and Hazlitt continually misquoted the poets they loved. Was there not a famous novelist who, in describing a University boat-race, wrote of the stroke of one of the boats : ' All rowed fast, but none rowed so fast as he ' ? Only a few years ago an able woman novelist gave us a picture of an Association football-match in which one of the characters picked up the ball and scored a try. I doubt, however, if she lost a single reader in consequence. No one read her books for information about football, and those who knew better than she read her novel with all the more pleasure because they discovered that on one point at least they were her superiors.

That, perhaps, is the chief value of error in any

kind of literature—that it makes the reader temporarily feel that he is an inch taller than the writer. Dr. Johnson endeared himself to posterity by making blunders in a book where blunders, one would have said, are least pardonable—in a dictionary. His accurate definitions are now of interest only to a few scholars ; his mistakes are still a source of delight to a multitude of readers. There is more joy in earth over one error discovered in a good writer than over a hundred impeccable pages. If a dryasdust scholar suddenly discovered that there were no Moors in Venice at the time of Othello, with what enthusiasm he would write to *The Times* about it ! Othello's noblest lines would never have quickened his pulses as the proof that Shakespeare had made a mistake would. Of all the letters that appear in the newspapers there are few written with such spiritual joy as those that point out a mistake. The true error-hunter is a man who searches for error as men search for gold during a gold-rush. His eurekas are uttered not over immortal phrases but over some tiny lapse in geography, ornithology, or even grammar. The poets have given as much pleasure by writing inaccurately about birds as by writing beautifully about them. What ornithologist has not enjoyed all those lines in which the poets make the female bird sing ? Or, at least, what ornithologist did not enjoy those lines till yesterday ? Now, unhappily, various writers have begun to produce evidence

suggesting that in several species the female bird as well as the male does sing. I do not know whether this theory is true or not, but, if it is, the poets will now derive as much pleasure from the mistakes of the ornithologists as the ornithologists once derived from the mistakes of the poets.

All comedy probably arises from our enjoyment of other people's mistakes. If we did not make mistakes there would be nothing in the world to laugh at. Hence, if we regard laughter as a blessing we should pay a tribute to error. In the history of the world the man who makes mistakes has never been sufficiently appreciated. For all the mirth he has given us we have repaid him with the basest ingratitude. Of this ingratitude you will find evidence if you turn to *Punch* and look carefully at its admirable weekly collection of the errors of journalists and printers. Not long ago, it was *Punch's* custom to give the name of the paper from which the misprint or mis-statement quoted was taken, and you would imagine that any journalist or printer would have felt honoured at having been singled out as one who had added to the gaiety of the most heavily-taxed of the nations. But it was otherwise. Protests—so, at least, I have heard—poured into the *Punch* office from journalists and printers who were threatened with dismissal or reprimanded because their casual blunders had been trumpeted to all the world as treasures. Hence, in

Punch to-day the source of a misprint is never given, and we are told vaguely that it comes from a 'morning paper,' a 'Sunday paper,' or an 'Irish paper.' In a world that rightly appraised error, the newspapers would protest against this as an attempt to rob them of the credit of having increased human happiness. If the *Oban Times* contains a good misprint why should the nation not be allowed to applaud it? If a journalist on the *Berkhamsted Eagle* refers to 'The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck' as 'Wordsworth's immortal lyric,' why should his fame be obscured by a dull reference to a 'Hertfordshire paper'? So highly do I esteem misprints that if I were editor of a paper I should see to it that there was a worthy misprint in every number, if not on every page. I should also gratify my readers by misquoting the poets, putting towns in the wrong counties, confusing Darius and Xerxes, and inserting a daily anachronism. I am sure the paper would sell in millions, since it would give every reader a daily flush of superiority, a daily chuckle of delight in his own wisdom and a daily reason for writing a letter to the editor. And I should certainly give a post on my staff to the journalist, quoted in *Punch*, who recently began an article : 'The sting of the serpent is in its tail, we are told.'

The newspapers nowadays are full of accurate articles on natural history, but I confess, as an ordinary reader, no other sentence I have read about

natural history has for a long time given me so much pleasure as this quiet mis-statement. The serpent, thus inaccurately represented, becomes a fabulous creature, wonderful as a Dragon, breathing comedy. And, everywhere we look, we find similar evidence of the importance of error. The pedantically accurate schoolboy does not interest us as he repeats like a parrot the dull fact that William the Conqueror won the Battle of Hastings, but a boy capable of making the error of attributing the victory to William of Orange immediately becomes a person of national importance, and he is quoted in a thousand papers with Prime Ministers and Mr. Shaw. Hence it seems to me it is not only human but wise to err. The novelists need not be perturbed by being accused of blundering. My own conviction is that they do not blunder half enough. We shall never have a novelist of the magnitude of Shakespeare till we have a novelist who can make blunders of the same magnitude as Shakespeare's.

From *The Green Man*.

PROBLEMS OF A JOURNALIST'S LIFE

BY ROSE MACAULAY

YOUR first problem as a journalist is to decide what kind of journalist you are going to be. There are newspaperowners, editors, politicaljournalists, leader writers, middle writers, reporters, book reviewers, dramatic critics, art critics, serial story writers, foreign correspondents, special correspondents, fashion recorders, personal gossips, Woman's Page writers, and those who write letters to the papers. The last class is the largest, and the easiest to get into. Probably you are fit to be no other kind of journalist, and this may well be your only way of ever seeing yourself in print. As the largest class of journalists, it shall be dealt with first. It may be divided roughly into two (unequal) sections—those who write letters to the press and sign them with a name (such as Sydenham, Montague of Beaulieu, Birkenhead, or L. E. Chubb) and those who write letters to the press and sign them with some noun or adjective other than a name (such as Patriot, Free Trader, or Mother of Many). It may further be divided into those who write admiring letters, beginning 'Sir, As always, you have taken the only

right line on this question,' those who write disagreeable letters, beginning 'Sir, Since the disgraceful article in your last issue, my wife, myself, and fifteen others have all given up your paper,' and those who broach some other topic than the rightness or wrongness of the editor, and begin 'Sir, My small dog has recently taken to whistling between his teeth. I wonder if any of your readers have had a similar experience with their pets,' or 'Sir, It is well known that women have no sense of honour or of humour ; their cradles are empty and their skirts and hair too short.' Into this section come also the small group of sensible and well-informed letters which get put on central pages of the *Times*. These are always signed, and usually with the name of some peer. They are fond of Summer Time.

Writing letters to the press is a great and arduous profession, and may well take your whole time and all your stamps. You can only expect to get a small proportion of them printed, however many you write. You will find it advisable to write to different papers with different pseudonyms. For the *Times*, 'Sydenham' is not a bad one. For the *New Statesman*, something sensible and Fabian (avoid J. R. MacDonald). For the *Nation*, something Liberal, with perhaps a Manchester address. Not till you get down to the penny press should you, as a rule, adopt adjectives or common nouns—though you may risk 'Anti-Bolshevik' or 'Patriot' in the *Morning*

Post. For the *Church Times*, 'Anglo-Catholic' or 'Sacerdotes' goes. As to the contents of your letter, the *Spectator* will like to hear about your dog or cat, the *Nation* about some bird you may have noticed out of doors (you had better, with intelligent papers, keep to topics such as these, not try to refer to politics or economics, which will be above your capacity). You can tell the *Morning Post* anything favourable about the Dominions or Ulster which you have observed, or anything unfavourable about Bolsheviks, Liberals, or the Irish Free State; you can complain to any paper about income-tax forms, to the *Daily Mail* about foreigners, to the *Westminster Gazette* about tariff duties, and to the *Church Times* about Dr. Barnes. When in despair about getting any of them printed anywhere, begin, 'Sir, How right you always are!'

Enough about this (after all) inferior section of the fraternity of journalists. If I have expatiated on it at too great length, its bulk must be my excuse. Let us pass to newspaper owners. The great problem for a newspaper owner is to produce a newspaper which will sell so greatly as to pay its expenses. This is very seldom done—only by a few dailies and a few of the brighter and chattier other periodicals. Most of the more intelligent press has to be subsidised. Of course this is a very good plan, if you are fortunate enough to find anyone at once so foolish and so wealthy as to subsidise your journal. If you

are not, there are three courses to adopt—either a paper pays its way and goes on, or does not pay its way and does not go on, or does not pay its way but goes on just the same. Your paper will probably adopt the second of these courses, which is the most usual with papers. But, while it yet continues, you may find it quite good fun. You can put into it all the things you have always wished were in other papers. You can see that the editor writes the kind of articles you wish to have written, instead of the foolish and tedious stuff written by other editors. You can sack the whole staff at any moment (if you have been careful as to the contracts you allowed them to make). You can live in one of the Home Counties and enjoy the pleasures of a country life. You are immeasurably above journalists, for you can order journalists about, causing their pens to run with venom or honey at your pleasure. Further, you need know nothing yourself; you can leave the sordid acquisition of facts to your staff; all you have to say is, Take this line, or Take that. It is a princely life—while it lasts. Enjoy it while you may.

Let me descend to those who write in papers themselves. Even editors have to do this. They have to write articles on the Situation. Usually the situation is not of the slightest importance, but writers on it have to pretend that it is. Sometimes it is political, sometimes international, sometimes

nothing in particular. Whatever it is, editors must comment on it (*a*) in such a way as to make it sound important, (*b*) from the point of view that they and their readers are accustomed to take. Casual and frivolous comments are no use, and will only depreciate the credit of your paper. If, for instance, your owner does not care for some politician, you must say so, gravely and firmly. If there is a political election, you must take a side. Editors, even if Gallios at heart, must not show it. After a general election, you must say, if your side has been defeated, 'The temporary wave of madness which has passed over us in no way represents the true feeling of the country, but is due to a number of subsidiary causes.' If your side has been successful, all you need say is 'Once again the people of Britain have spoken, with their usual decision and calm good sense.' Whatever you do, you must have it that the people of Britain are *on your side*. It does not do to seem to disagree with this great people, even when they are possessed by a temporary evil influence. You must never, on any account, say, 'The people of Britain are wrong, as usual, the damned idiots. They never had any sense and probably never will have.' For you must recollect that it is the people of Britain (or some of them) who read your paper. Sections, on the other hand, of the people of Britain, such as Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, and so forth, you may allude to with distaste, for these,

however numerous, do not represent the Great Mind of the Nation. Above all, a political editor must remember that his party and his party leaders are invariably right, however oddly they appear to be behaving. As to the leaders of the other parties, it is as well to get Lord Birkenhead, or Mr. E. T. Raymond, or Mr. Philip Guedalla, to do a series of articles on them. This will soon show them up in their proper colours.

Not all editors are political. You may be a literary editor, and edit either (*a*) a whole literary paper, such as the *London Mercury*, or *John o' London's Weekly*, or (*b*) the literary part of an ordinary paper. Both are sad lives. The chief trouble of (*a*) is the articles and stories and poems which people send you, and some of which (unless you write the whole paper yourself, which is economical but takes time) you will have to put in and pay for, and they are not worth it, for they look very silly on the page. The chief trouble of (*b*) is the books which publishers send you, and which you have to get reviewed, and these are not worth it either. With reviewing itself we will deal presently, under *Criticism*.

You may be, on the other hand, and more probably, not an editor at all. Even so, you may still have to write leading articles, for you may be kept as a leader writer. If yours is a morning paper, you may be required any night to sit down and write suitable comments on one or another of the day's

events. The chief thing to remember when you do this is that you must try not to be too greatly out of accord with the sentiments usually expressed in your paper. Only the editor (or more usually, the owner) may perform a volte-face ; it is not for such as you ; in fact, your leader will not be printed if you do. You should not aim, in leaders, at originality, epigram, or smartness ; you will probably not achieve these things, and you might lose your job if you did. Only quite a few leader writers are amusing.

It may be your lot to write the kind of extra leader which some papers have. This must be On Something, it does not much matter what, so long as it is not connected with current events, but you must write in a gentle, musing, good-humoured style, and if you are cross about anything you must not say so.

Now let us suppose for a moment that you are, instead, a reporter. Reporters have not to comment, but to report. They are sent out by News Editors, each after a separate story. You must remember, if you are a reporter, that you must return to your office with the story you were sent out to get, however many others you may collect as you go about. However, if some other amazing scene than that which you have been sent out to view should meet your eye by the way, you can certainly make a note of it and submit it. In this connection, you should remember that everything which occurs is News if

you and the news editor like to make it so. No day need be a news-less day. The daily round, the common task, will furnish all you need to ask. Thus, even if you cannot truthfully report a crime, a street accident, a divorce, or a fall of the Prince of Wales from his horse, you can always say, 'Amazing Crowds in Oxford Street' (or at some railway station, or anywhere else where people congregate) 'Scenes.' You may, in fact, report anything you like, provided that you report it in the right spirit, with the correct amount of élan, gusto, and amaze. News is like food ; it is the cooking and serving that makes it acceptable, not the material itself. You should, before you can hope to succeed as a reporter, have a course in Journalese. (*Hugo's Journalese in Twelve Lessons without a Master* will be found a useful handbook. The Berlitz system is also a good one.)

A course of this language will also be found useful if your job is that of literary, dramatic, or artistic critic. You must learn to call certain books or plays 'important,' even though you cannot see how any book or play can possibly be important. You may also say 'convincing' (or unconvincing, as the case may more likely be) instead of crudely saying that the thing is well or badly done. You will also find 'gripping,' which is journalese for interesting, a useful word.

If you are a practised reviewer of fiction, you will very soon learn to divide the books you have to

review into quite a few categories according to their subjects. Thus, they may deal with Family Life, Village Life, London Life, Married Life, Individual Life, School Life, American Life, Corpses, International Conspiracies, South Sea Islands, or Love. As you will not wish to read the books, I will set down a few hints as to what to say of each class. Family Life and Village Life are both rather sad, disagreeable subjects. The people who live in families and villages are seldom good or at all nice to one another. Villagers are the worst, for they are imbecile as well as criminal. They go further than families, as families only think and speak criminally, and villagers act. You may safely call a Village Life novel realistic and powerful, even, in some cases, sordid. If you call a Family Life novel any of these, you will probably be going further than the text warrants, and may be sued for libel. London Life novels are much gayer. They deal, as a rule, with London, W. 1. You may say, if you like, that they are about well-known society figures, many of whom will be easily recognisable to their friends and enemies. London Life novels are not realistic, powerful, or sordid, as people in London have a wider range of entertainment and are therefore more cheerful. Besides, novels about persons who pay income tax are not realistic. And persons who pay super-tax are not considered by most reviewers real people at all. Novels about Married Life are

often 'poignant studies of a very modern problem' (à propos, you will find much of what you need to say kindly supplied for you by the publisher on the paper wrapper. But you must not trust blurb-writers too implicitly, for they have not, any more than you, read the book about which they blurb; I once read a blurb which thought the brigand villain was a horse). Stories of School Life are a little *passé* now. But, should one come your way, you can safely say that it deals once more with the problems of adolescence from a realistic angle, and that nothing is shirked, though Mr. —— is always restrained.

American Life may be divided into sub-sections. There are novels about Eastern America, or civilised life (perhaps by Mrs. Wharton or Miss Sedgwick), Middle Western Life (which you should praise), Wild Western Life (which are about cow-boys or long white trails, and published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton), and South American Life (which I recommend you to read, as they are probably readable).

Novels about Corpses are often readable, too. For the corpse, you should look in the library, in one of the early chapters, and there you will find the murdered body of an elderly gentleman. It is safe to say of this book that the mystery is well kept to the end (or else that you spotted the murderer straight off, according as you wish well or ill to the

author) and that there is a happy affair between the detective, or the suspected but innocent young man (you had better ascertain which) and the corpse's niece, daughter, or ward (you need not ascertain which).

Novels about International Conspiracies deal with Bolsheviks, and relate world-wide schemes for the overthrow of established governments and the setting up of a world dominion. You will quite soon see if a book is about this. You may safely say that the Bolsheviks are bad men, and that their schemes are defeated by the intrepid hero.

Books about South Sea Islands reveal themselves at once. If you open them anywhere, you will see 'yam,' 'bread-fruit,' 'palm toddy,' 'kanaka,' 'beach-comber,' or 'lagoon.' You can call them picturesque, romantic, or exciting, or (if you feel more like it) 'cheap lagoonery.'

Books about Love deal with a well-worn subject in a new and moving way.

Some reviewers like to be quoted by publishers in advertisements ; others are shy, and do not. If you do, you should make your favourable comments detachable from the context ; thus, if you desire to express distaste and yet be quoted, you may say 'This cannot be called a really good book,' and trust that the publishers may know which words to select. If you do *not* like being quoted, you should be careful to express any favourable views you may

hold in a delicate and obscure way which shall elude the publisher's grasp, and see you do not hang your laudations like cullable blossoms on a bough.

In reviewing, you should try to sound more intelligent than you are, and never fall back on saying 'I like this book, it seems to me interesting, and the kind of book I like.' Proper reviewers never write like this.

Nor do proper dramatic critics. It is very nice to be a dramatic critic, and you must get that job if you can, but there are not nearly enough of them to go round, so you probably won't. It is a nice job because you get a free stall for the first or second nights of plays, and having to think of something to say about the play (and getting paid for saying it) is a small price to pay for this. You may even enjoy expressing your views on the play. Everyone has views on the plays that they have seen, and mentioning them is not at all difficult. It does not matter whether you mention them well or ill, for scarcely anyone will read you. (This applies also to criticisms of books.) I say *scarcely* anyone, because your comments will be eagerly perused by the whole cast of the play, as well as by the author, manager, and producer. But be sure you will have no effect on the general public, who know better than to believe you. So you can say just what you like (unless you are friends with the author, manager, producer, or some of the cast). It is thought better form if

somewhere in the course of your notice you deplore the present inferiority of the English stage, and lament that in England there is no national theatre, which means a theatre run by the Government. Members of the Government like this to be done, as they do not receive many compliments on their artistic talents. It is usual also to mention that one or another of the actresses has beauty, even if she cannot act ; actresses like this. It is not, for some reason, so customary to comment on the beauty of actors, though they too like it.

If you do not wish to be out of line with the other critics, there is no reason why you should be, as it is customary for the critics to meet together between the acts in the refreshment room and decide together what to say. If, on the other hand, you wish to be original, you should join these gatherings all the same, so that you will know what not to say. It is really better to be original, just at first, as it gives an impression that you have thought for yourself. But you must remember that it is better form to admire the plays of other dramatic critics, as you never know when you may not write a play yourself ; most critics do. Then, if you have got on the wrong side of the other critics by crabbing their plays, where are you ? There is a good deal of give and take in matters of criticism.

On some first nights you must say that the audience was brilliant. Especially you can say this

of a Sunday play, which other actors and actresses often attend. No one knows how an audience shows its brilliance, and whether the word refers to clothes, wits, or social eminence, but it probably means merely ‘heard of before.’ Anyhow, if short of remarks to make about the play, you can thus comment on the audience, who, if they should chance to read you, will be pleased.

So much for critics, on the whole a not very well thought of race. It pays better to be a serial story writer. But it is even more difficult to get this job, for it is at least a thousand to one against any paper accepting you in this capacity. You should aim first at the well-got-up, glossy monthlies, for these pay best, but I fear you will have no luck with them, for they like what is called a Name, and I am assuming that your name is not a Name. Less ambitious are the dailies; but even these will probably reject anything you write. There are two necessary ingredients in a daily serial—love and a synopsis. If you cannot manage both of these, you may as well renounce serial ambitions and take to some other branch of journalism, such as Personal Notes. These are much easier. They consist of little items of information about persons supposedly known to the public, such as ‘Mr. —’, whose friends know him as “Nicky,” has recently returned from a trip to the South Seas,’ or ‘Miss —, the novelist, tall, and with delicately arched black

brows, tells me that she writes five hours a day in her lovely country home at Beckenham.' You can, if you like, call on your victims and seek an interview, asking them who are their greatest friends, what in their lives has most deeply influenced them, and what they think of the Oxford trouser. If by these means you annoy some persons, they cannot easily avenge themselves, and if you please them it is well.

If you write the Woman's Page, you must learn about face creams, foods, and furniture polish, for these are what women like. You must learn to write like this : 'Dear Dot, what *do* you think Betty and I saw in Marshall's yesterday? The dinkiest little boudoir cap, shaped like a convolvulus flower and trimmed with point de Venise.' You must keep in close touch with the advertisement department, and mention by name those firms whose advertisement your paper desires, as 'I had the loveliest face massage yesterday from Mrs. —, in Bond Street. I've never before had "that fresh feeling" so marvellously. Every woman ought to go.' Mrs. — will then send in an advertisement for next week's issue, and the advertisement department will thank you.

But the best journalistic job is that of Foreign Correspondent. For this you live in some pleasant foreign city, with a suitable entertainment allowance as well as your salary, and have a very good time

(unless you are unfortunate enough to be sent to Russia). You can send home any news you like, for no one will know whether or not you are telling the truth. You must by all means be this kind of journalist if you can.

We have dealt thus at large, though by no means exhaustively, with various problems of journalism, because we are convinced that it is an important profession, and that the Fourth Estate, as it has been well called, should be upheld by all who desire their country's good. Ephemeral the productions of this estate may and indeed must be. But let them be flowers that bloom beautifully, and give out a sweet fragrance ere they perish. Those who hold that the only use of the press is to lay the fires and line drawers, give it, I think, too low a place in the scheme of things. For it also serves to keep moths from clothes, these little creatures having, it is said, a great and unreasonable distaste for printer's ink.

From *A Casual Commentary*.

THE WEST WIND

BY JOSEPH CONRAD

THE West Wind reigns over the seas surrounding the coasts of these kingdoms ; and from the gateways of the channels, from promontories as if from watch-towers, from estuaries of rivers as if from postern gates, from passage-ways, inlets, straits, firths, the garrison of the Isle and the crews of the ships going and returning look to the westward to judge by the varied splendours of his sunset mantle the mood of that arbitrary ruler. The end of the day is the time to gaze at the kingly face of the Westerly Weather, who is the arbiter of ships' destinies. Benignant and splendid, or splendid and sinister, the western sky reflects the hidden purposes of the royal mind. Clothed in a mantle of dazzling gold or draped in rags of black clouds like a beggar, the might of the Westerly Wind sits enthroned upon the western horizon with the whole North Atlantic as a footstool for his feet and the first twinkling stars making a diadem for his brow. Then the seamen, attentive courtiers of the weather, think of regulating the conduct of their ships by the mood of the master. The West Wind is too great a king to

be a dissembler : he is no calculator plotting deep schemes in a sombre heart ; he is too strong for small artifices ; there is passion in all his moods, even in the soft mood of his serene days, in the grace of his blue sky whose immense and unfathomable tenderness reflected in the mirror of the sea embraces, possesses, lulls to sleep the ships with white sails. He is all things to all oceans ; he is like a poet seated upon a throne—magnificent, simple, barbarous, pensive, generous, impulsive, changeable, unfathomable—but when you understand him, always the same. Some of his sunsets are like pageants devised for the delight of the multitude, when all the gems of the royal treasure-house are displayed above the sea. Others are like the opening of his royal confidence, tinged with thoughts of sadness and compassion in a melancholy splendour meditating upon the short-lived peace of the waters. And I have seen him put the pent-up anger of his heart into the aspect of the inaccessible sun, and cause it to glare fiercely like the eye of an implacable autocrat out of a pale and frightened sky.

He is the war-lord who sends his battalions of Atlantic rollers to the assault of our seaboard. The compelling voice of the West Wind musters up to his service all the might of the ocean. At the bidding of the West Wind there arises a great commotion in the sky above these Islands, and a great rush of waters falls upon our shores. The sky of the westerly

weather is full of flying clouds, of great big white clouds coming thicker and thicker till they seem to stand welded into a solid canopy, upon whose grey face the lower wrack of the gale, thin, black, and angry-looking, flies past with vertiginous speed. Denser and denser grows this dome of vapours, descending lower and lower upon the sea, narrowing the horizon around the ship. And the characteristic aspect of westerly weather, the thick, grey, smoky, and sinister tone sets in, circumscribing the view of the men, drenching their bodies, oppressing their souls, taking their breath away with booming gusts, deafening, blinding, driving, rushing them onwards in a swaying ship towards our coasts lost in mists and rain.

The caprice of the winds, like the wilfulness of men, is fraught with the disastrous consequences of self-indulgence. Long anger, the sense of his uncontrolled power, spoils the frank and generous nature of the West Wind. It is as if his heart were corrupted by a malevolent and brooding rancour. He devastates his own kingdom in the wantonness of his force. South-west is the quarter of the heavens where he presents his darkened brow. He breathes his rage in terrific squalls, and overwhelms his realm with an inexhaustible welter of clouds. He strews the seeds of anxiety upon the decks of scudding ships, makes the foam-stripped ocean look old, and sprinkles with grey hairs the heads of shipmasters in the

homeward-bound ships running for the Channel. The Westerly Wind asserting his sway from the south-west quarter is often like a monarch gone mad, driving forth with wild imprecations the most faithful of his courtiers to shipwreck, disaster, and death.

The south-westerly weather is the thick weather *par excellence*. It is not the thickness of the fog ; it is rather a contraction of the horizon, a mysterious veiling of the shores with clouds that seem to make a low vaulted dungeon around the running ship. It is not blindness ; it is a shortening of the sight. The West Wind does not say to the seaman, ' You shall be blind ' ; it restricts merely the range of his vision and raises the dread of land within his breast. It makes of him a man robbed of half his force, of half his efficiency. Many times in my life, standing in long sea-boots and streaming oilskins at the elbow of my commander on the poop of a homeward-bound ship making for the Channel, and gazing ahead into the grey and tormented waste, I have heard a weary sigh shape itself into a studiously casual comment :

' Can't see very far in this weather.'

And have made answer in the same low, perfunctory tone :

' No, sir.'

It would be merely the instinctive voicing of an ever-present thought associated closely with the consciousness of the land somewhere ahead and of

the great speed of the ship. Fair wind, fair wind ! Who would dare to grumble at a fair wind ? It was a favour of the Western King, who rules masterfully the North Atlantic from the latitude of the Azores to the latitude of Cape Farewell. A famous shov^e this to end a good passage with ; and yet, somehow, one could not muster upon one's lips the smile of a courtier's gratitude. This favour was dispensed to you from under an overbearing scowl, which is the true expression of the great autocrat when he has made up his mind to give a battering to some ships and to hunt certain others home in one breath of cruelty and benevolence, equally distracting.

'No, sir. Can't see very far.'

Thus would the mate's voice repeat the thought of the master, both gazing ahead, while under their feet the ship rushes at some twelve knots in the direction of the lee shore ; and only a couple of miles in front of her swinging and dripping jib-boom, carried naked with an upward slant like a spear, a grey horizon closes the view with a multitude of waves surging upwards violently as if to strike at the stooping clouds.

Awful and threatening scowls darken the face of the West Wind in his clouded, south-west mood ; and from the King's throne-hall in the western board stronger gusts reach you, like the fierce shouts of raving fury to which only the gloomy grandeur of

the scene imparts a saving dignity. A shower pelts the deck and the sails of the ship as if flung with a scream by an angry hand ; and when the night closes in, the night of a south-westerly gale, it seems more hopeless than the shade of Hades. The south-westerly mood of the great West Wind is a lightless mood, without sun, moon, or stars, with no gleam of light but the phosphorescent flashes of the great sheets of foam that, boiling up on each side of the ship, fling bluish gleams upon her dark and narrow hull, rolling as she runs, chased by enormous seas, distracted in the tumult.

There are some bad nights in the kingdom of the West Wind for homeward-bound ships making for the Channel ; and the days of wrath dawn upon them colourless and vague like the timid turning up of invisible lights upon the scene of a tyrannical and passionate outbreak, awful in the monotony of its method and the increasing strength of its violence. It is the same wind, the same clouds, the same wildly racing seas, the same thick horizon around the ship. Only the wind is stronger, the clouds seem denser and more overwhelming, the waves appear to have grown bigger and more threatening during the night. The hours, whose minutes are marked by the crash of the breaking seas, slip by with the screaming, pelting squalls overtaking the ship as she runs on and on with darkened canvas, with streaming spars and dripping ropes. The downpours thicken.

Preceding each shower a mysterious gloom, like the passage of a shadow above the firmament of grey clouds, filters down upon the ship. Now and then the rain pours upon your head in streams as if from spouts. It seems as if your ship were going to be drowned before she sank, as if all atmosphere had turned to water. You gasp, you splutter, you are blinded and deafened, you are submerged, obliterated, dissolved, annihilated, streaming all over as if your limbs, too, had turned to water. And every nerve on the alert you watch for the clearing-up mood of the Western King, that shall come with a shift of wind as likely as not to whip all the three masts out of your ship in the twinkling of an eye.

From *The Mirror of the Sea.*

THE HORIZON

BY ALICE MEYNELL

To mount a hill is to lift with you something lighter and brighter than yourself or than any meaner burden. You lift the world, you raise the horizon ; you give a signal for the distance to stand up. It is like the scene in the Vatican when a Cardinal, with his dramatic Italian hands, bids the kneeling groups to arise. He does more than bid them. He lifts them, he gathers them up, far and near, with the upward gesture of both arms ; he takes them to their feet with the compulsion of his expressive force. Or it is as when a conductor takes his players to successive heights of music. You summon the sea, you bring the mountains, the distances unfold unlooked-for wings and take an even flight. You are but a man lifting his weight upon the upward road, but as you climb the circle of the world goes up to face you.

Not here or there, but with a definite continuity, the unseen unfolds. This distant hill outsoars that less distant, but all are on the wing, and the plain raises its verge. All things follow and wait upon your eyes. You lift these up, not by the raising of

your eyelids, but by the pilgrimage of your body. 'Lift thine eyes to the mountains.' It is then that other mountains lift themselves to your human eyes.

It is the law whereby the eye and the horizon answer one another that makes the way up a hill so full of universal movement. All the landscape is on pilgrimage. The town gathers itself closer, and its inner harbours literally come to light ; the headlands repeat themselves ; little cups within the treeless hills open and show their farms. In the sea are many regions. A breeze is at play for a mile or two, and the surface is turned. There are roads and curves in the blue and in the white. Not a step of your journey up the height that has not its replies in the steady motion of land and sea. Things rise together like a flock of many-feathered birds.

But it is the horizon, more than all else, you have come in search of ; that is your chief companion on your way. It is to uplift the horizon to the equality of your sight that you go high. You give it a distance worthy of the skies. There is no distance, except the distance in the sky, to be seen from the level earth ; but from the height is to be seen the distance of this world. The line is sent back into the remoteness of light, the verge is removed beyond verge, into a distance that is enormous and minute.

So delicate and so slender is the distant horizon that nothing less near than Queen Mab and her

chariot can equal its fineness. Here on the edges of the eyelids, or there on the edges of the world—we know no other place for things so exquisitely made, so thin, so small and tender. The touches of her passing, as close as dreams, or the utmost vanishing of the forest or the ocean in the white light between the earth and the air ; nothing else is quite so intimate and fine. The extremities of a mountain view have just such tiny touches as the closeness of closing eyes shut in.

On the horizon is the sweetest light. Elsewhere colour mars the simplicity of light ; but there colour is effaced, not as men efface it, by a blur or darkness, but by mere light. The bluest sky disappears on that shining edge ; there is not substance enough for colour. The rim of the hill, of the woodland, of the meadowland, of the sea—let it only be far enough—has the same absorption of colour ; and even the dark things drawn upon the bright edges of the sky are lucid, the light is among them, and they are mingled with it. The horizon has its own way of making bright the pencilled figures of forests, which are black but luminous.

On the horizon, moreover, closes the long perspective of the sky. There you perceive that an ordinary sky of clouds—not a thunder sky—is not a wall but the underside of a floor. You see the clouds that repeat each other grow smaller by distance ; and you find a new unity in the sky and earth that

gather alike the great lines of their designs to the same distant close. There is no longer an alien sky, tossed up in unintelligible heights.

Of all the things that London has forgone, the most to be regretted is the horizon. Not the bark of the trees in its right colour ; not the spirit of the growing grass, which has in some way escaped from the parks ; not the smell of the earth unmixed with the odour of soot ; but rather the mere horizon. No doubt the sun makes a beautiful thing of the London smoke at times, and in some places of the sky ; but not there, not where the soft sharp distance ought to shine. To be dull there is to put all relations and comparisons in the wrong, and to make the sky lawless.

A horizon dark with storm is another thing. The weather darkens the line and defines it, or mingles it with the raining cloud ; or softly dims it, or blackens it against a gleam of narrow sunshine in the sky. The stormy horizon will take wing, and the sunny. Go high enough, and you can raise the light from beyond the shower, and the shadow from behind the ray. Only the shapeless and lifeless smoke disobeys and defeats the summons of the eyes.

Up at the top of the seaward hill your first thought is one of some compassion for sailors, inasmuch as they see but little of their sea. A child on a mere Channel cliff looks upon spaces and sizes that they cannot see in the Pacific, on the ocean side of the

world.. Never in the solitude of the blue water, never between the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn, never between the Islands and the West, has the seaman seen anything but a little circle of sea. The Ancient Mariner, when he was alone, did but drift through a thousand narrow solitudes. The sailor has nothing but his mast, indeed. And but for his mast he would be isolated in as small a world as that of a traveller through the plains.

A close circlet of waves is the sailor's famous offing. His offing hardly deserves the name of horizon. To hear him you might think something of his offing, but you do not so when you sit down in the centre of it.

As the upspringing of all things at your going up the heights, so steady, so swift, is the subsidence at your descent. The further sea lies away, hill folds down behind hill. The whole upstanding world, with its looks serene and alert, its distant replies, its signals of many miles, its signs and communications of light, gathers down and pauses. This flock of birds which is the mobile landscape wheels and goes to earth. The Cardinal weighs down the audience with his downward hands. Farewell to the most delicate horizon.

From *Essays*.

THE PLEASURE OF READING

BY VISCOUNT GREY

My subject, 'The Pleasure of Reading,' was chosen partly because it is so wide that it covers almost any discursiveness, and partly I have chosen it because I think that modern conditions are putting the pleasure of reading more and more in jeopardy. Some people have such a passion for reading that they will acquire the habit and maintain it against all obstacles. There are others with the inclination and capacity to get that pleasure, but who must find it increasingly difficult under modern conditions to indulge the inclination and cultivate the capacity, and if they do not do so they lose one of the greatest resources and most precious recreations of life. I am using the phrase 'The Pleasure of Reading' not in the sense of amusement, but in the sense of that deep and abiding pleasure which increases the more it is indulged. This deserves the name of 'recreation,' because it actually refreshes and restores as well as entertains. Then there is a third class of people to whom reading, because of the nature of their temperament, will never be any pleasure at all. These are in no danger whatever from modern

conditions. In old days I think it must have been easy to acquire the habit of reading. People stayed for months in the same house without stirring from it even for a night. The opportunities for reading were so many, and the opportunities for doing other things were comparatively so few, that the habit of reading must almost have been forced upon them. I have never been compelled to read *Sir Charles Grandison* myself, but I can well believe that a hundred and fifty years ago there were people who wished *Sir Charles Grandison* even longer than it is.

The first thing necessary to the pleasure of reading is that when people are young they should acquire the habit of reading. This is becoming more and more difficult. Before I was aware of things in the world, the Penny Post had already begun to make a change adverse to reading, by consuming a vast amount of time in correspondence that was unnecessary, trivial, or irksome. Railways have altered people's habits by making them move about much more. But railways have this compensating advantage—that, although they take people much away from home, a long railway journey affords a first-rate opportunity for reading. They were not, therefore, an unmixed disadvantage. But now things are changing. The motor-car is altogether unfavourable to reading. People consume more time in moving about than they did, and they

consume it under conditions which, even for people with good eyes, must make reading difficult, if not impossible. The telephone is a deadly disadvantage ; it minces time into fragments and frays the spirit. Wireless, with all its delights, is now being added as a distraction to divert people from time that might be given to the pleasure of reading. The cinematograph is another change in the same direction, and flying is becoming more and more common. All these things must make it more difficult for successive generations to acquire the habit of reading, and, if that habit be acquired, to maintain it. Even before all these changes it was not easy to maintain the habit, but it could be done. There is a story of Auberon Herbert—I do not know whether it is true or not, but I do not mind connecting it with his name, because it is a story I think entirely to his credit, and which I always recall with a sense of satisfaction and encouragement. He was staying in his country home, and some visitors were announced. He received them with perfect good manners, and, after a cordial welcome, he said to them, ‘And now what would you like to do ?—we are reading.’ We need more and more of that spirit.

A further disadvantage to reading is the great development of picture papers. Picture papers are tending to divert people not only from reading, but from thought. Where one used to see people get

into a railway carriage and settle down to a book, they now come with an armful of picture papers and look at the pictures with more or less transient amusement, one after the other, and so pass the time. I found the other day a person who during the war between the Turks and the Greeks expressed an opinion rather in favour of the Turks, because he or she (I will not reveal even the sex) said that, judging by the pictures in the papers, Mustapha Kemal looked rather a good sort of fellow.

In connection with this danger to reading I would like to quote to you what I consider a notable sonnet of Wordsworth, remarkable for the fact that it was written in 1846, when he was seventy-six years old, and that yet contains a good deal of his young fire, remarkable in that it was written when illustrated papers must have been in their infancy, and remarkable for the prescience with which he foresaw the danger to reading from the development of illustration, which was then so very little advanced. This is the sonnet :

Discourse was deemed Man's noblest attribute,
And written words the glory of his hand :
. Then followed Printing with enlarged command
For thought—dominion vast and absolute
For spreading truth, and making love expand.
Now Prose and verse sunk into disrepute
Must lacquey a dumb Art that best can suit
The taste of this once-intellectual Land.

A backward movement surely have we here,
From manhood—back to childhood ; for the age—
Back towards caverned life's first rude career.
Avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page !
Must eyes be all in all, the tongue and ear
Nothing ? Heaven keep us from a lower stage.

There is a good deal of power in that sonnet, but the remarkable thing is its prescience. If these recent developments are endangering the pleasure of reading, as undoubtedly they are, by making it more and more difficult to acquire the habit, let me suggest one thing which may be a help to maintain it. It is this : Plan reading beforehand ; have always in mind three or four books which you have decided you wish to read ; have the books at hand so that when the opportunity comes for reading the choice may be readily made ; otherwise, you may be staying in a country house, and something, not reading, may have been planned for the afternoon ; stormy weather causes that plan to be cancelled, and two or three hours are thrown into your lap—a little tumble-in of time—an unlooked-for opportunity for reading. We may, any of us, with such an opportunity find ourselves in the middle of a good library, and yet, if we have not already thought to ourselves and determined on some book which we wish to read, when the opportunity comes the greater part of the time may be lost in the difficulty of making a choice. I offer this as a practical counsel,

and it is easy to apply it. *The Times Literary Supplement* and any number of literary reviews are constantly recalling old books to mind, or suggesting new ones which we think we should like to read, and with this help it is very easy to have a plan ready which will secure that no opportunity for reading is lost when it occurs.

Now I pass on to consider one or two aspects of the actual pleasure of reading. Poetry, of course, comes first and highest. I am not going to talk about the pleasure in pure poetry, because to all who have it, it is so well known that no words of mine will increase the pleasure. To those who have not got it, no words that I could utter would give it. I refer to the abiding pleasure that people who love poetry get from rhythm, the music of words, and imagery. As an illustration of what I mean I would give Keats's three odes, *To a Nightingale*, *To a Grecian Urn*, and *To Autumn*, or the irresistible charm of the simplest songs of Shakespeare—such as *Fear no more the heat of the sun*. Those I give as an instance of pleasure in pure poetry. Not everybody is open to it. Some one, and some one of considerable intelligence and intellectual attainment, once said to me that the only effect produced by poetry was the reflection how much better the thing could be expressed in prose. Imagine taking Keats's *Ode to Autumn* and expressing it better in prose! But besides this there are further pleasures in poetry of

a deeper kind, but less obvious. There is the poetry which presents to us great thought in words and in forms that not only stir the intellect, but rouse emotion. I will say nothing in that connection of Shakespeare, because I am going to take a smaller illustration. I do not talk about Shakespeare for fear of falling into platitude. When I went out of office after eleven years of it, very tired, and for the time not fit for anything, I spent some weeks alone in the country. During that time I read, or re-read, several of Shakespeare's plays. The impression produced upon me by his incredible power and range was really that of awe ; I felt almost afraid to be alone in the room with him—as if I were in the presence of something supernatural. Therefore, if I do not draw illustrations from Shakespeare, it is not from want of appreciation of his stature and genius. The instance I would take is of poetry that deals with great thought, doing for us what is essential if our pleasure is to be really permanent, making our minds open on the infinite, making us think thoughts which we know are too great for any words to express, and bringing something, that before was beyond our comprehension, within the grasp of it. I will take an instance from another poet. I will ask you to think of Browning. In some passages it seems to me Browning is eminently successful in this power of bringing something of the infinite within our reach. He is not always successful. There

are some passages in which, after we have disentangled laboriously the mass of words in order to discover the great thought which has been captured in them, we find that the great thought has escaped, or at any rate that we cannot find it. A simile is suggested to me by Browning's own words, 'Fancies that broke through language and escaped.' Any one who is familiar with Browning's poems, such as *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Abt Volger*, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, and *Paracelsus*, will know what I mean when I say that Browning adds to the pleasure of poetry by bringing those who read him into contact with great thoughts.

The comment I would make on Tennyson is exactly the reverse. I do not mean by the 'reverse' that Tennyson's thought is small and that of Browning great. Tennyson deals with great thought, too, but by his extraordinary mastery of the music of words and his wonderful lucidity of expression he sometimes makes the thought seem not so great as it really is. At times he makes something of the infinite almost finite. This comment on Tennyson is not intended to be either criticism or praise. But it is worth bearing in mind that, when Tennyson seems very simple, the thought may be great, and that the difference between Tennyson and Browning is not in the greatness of the thought, but in the different ways in which the two men treat it. Take, for instance, the eleven opening stanzas of *In*

Memoriam; they are very simple to read—so simple that perhaps we may read them without realizing how great the thought is. Browning treats of the same kind of thought, and when he does so we have no doubt that it is great. Sometimes he makes it even obscure, whereas Tennyson makes it so simple that he deceives us as to its depth, as a very limpid and clear water will seem more shallow than it really is. So much I would say about that part of the pleasure of great poetry. Beyond the music of words, the rhythm, the imagery, there is the great thought which touches us with emotion.

But there is more than this pleasure to be found in poetry. I once stayed in a house as a guest for a night where a formidable volume was kept. It was a volume of which every page had a series of set questions designed to draw out the opinions of those to whom the volume was presented. I was, happily, too young and too insignificant to be asked to go through that ordeal, but I was shown the volume, and one of the guests who had preceded me had been John Morley. He had not been spared the ordeal, and he had gone through it in all seriousness, and opposite the deadly question, ‘Who is your favourite poet?’ he had written the name of ‘Wordsworth.’ I, too, should have written the name of Wordsworth—certainly I should write it now. It is worth considering why John Morley wrote ‘Wordsworth,’ and why many of us would

name Wordsworth as our favourite poet. Of course, it is impossible to account satisfactorily for this, to catch one's own thought and feeling so clearly as to justify this preference. But one reason, no doubt, is that for enduring satisfaction in poetry we want strength. Browning has splendid strength which never fails or falters ; but Wordsworth, too, is strong. If he expresses, as he sometimes does, great dejection, great depression, he never rests or brings his poem to an end till he stands with both feet planted on firm ground by some thought which has pulled him up, rescued him from depression, and made him erect and confident. It is interesting to compare Wordsworth and Shelley in this respect. It does not add to the pleasure of reading to exalt one author at the expense of another, and I am not introducing this comparison for the purpose of depreciating Shelley, but you will notice that Shelley is sometimes content to leave you with a cry of despair. Wordsworth, after expressing deep dejection, never ends till he has become confident and strong again. You will find instances of what I mean in Wordsworth's *Lines on the Death of Fox* ; you will find it in *The Leech Gatherer*, and you will find it in the *Afterthought* (of the Duddon sonnets), and in many other places. There is a further pleasure in poetry which is that of intimacy. When people say Wordsworth is the poet they read most, or the poet they like best, what they really feel is that they have

a certain intimacy with Wordsworth—that Wordsworth has revealed to them some of their own experience, expressed something of which they were barely conscious, and revealed to them other things which were really in them, but of which they were unconscious. In this way there has come a feeling which can best be described as that of intimacy, which, apart altogether from his merits as a poet, makes Wordsworth peculiarly attractive to the reader. Having said so much about him, I would only add this—that when you are quite confident that you appreciate Wordsworth's poetry, that you set it high, that you are grateful for it, even that you have some reverence for it, you are entitled to get a certain amusement out of his foibles. One form of amusement is easily found by reading the extraordinarily stiff or trivial labels which he chose to attach as titles to some of his poems. *Ode to Duty* is not a title which attracted me very much. The poem attracts and holds me; but the title did not draw me to the poem. *Resolution and Independence* does not suggest poetry at all. Happily in this instance Wordsworth vouchsafes an alternative title, *The Leech Gatherer*. *Lines on Hearing that the Dissolution of Mr. Fox was Hourly Expected*, *Extempore Effusion on the Death of James Hogg*—neither of these titles prepares you for the beautiful things which these poems contain. Then we get *Incident in the Life of a Favourite Dog*, followed

by *Tribute to the Memory of the same Dog*, and, finally, *On Seeing a Needle-Case in the Form of a Harp*. I have laughed often over these titles, and it is right that any one who is quite sure of his admiration for Wordsworth and his gratitude to him should indulge in this amusement ; but to people who do not appreciate Wordsworth's poetry, and who laugh at these things, I would say, be sure that your laughter is not of that kind which has been compared to the ' crackling of thorns under a pot.'

I would say this further : the habit of reading poetry should be acquired when people are young. What we acquire and learn to love when we are young stands by us through life. It has been difficult in all ages for people who are past middle life to appreciate the genius of new poets who have arisen in their lifetime. Wordsworth wrote his best poetry long before Queen Victoria was born. Shelley and Keats were dead before she came to the throne, but they came by their own in public estimation in the Victorian age, and, having come by their own, they have little difficulty in maintaining it as the generations go on. It is astonishing to look back and see how people of real literary ability and power have been absolutely blind to the merits of poetry written when they themselves were in middle life, which we, who have come after them, recognize at once as being of the first rank. Let us make sure of the

poetry that we like while we are young ; then we keep it easily through life, for it is difficult to be certain of appreciating and enjoying new poetry after we have passed middle age.

Next to poetry I put novels—the great novels of character. They must be long to be great. It needs a long book to present a character so that it can be really grasped and understood. Short stories, however vivid their presentation of character, are something like a brilliant pen-and-ink sketch. The great novel, on the other hand, makes the characters stand out as if they were sculptured. Of such great novels it is worth noting that some of the most famous depend not entirely, but to some extent, upon dealing with love as passion ; by this the interest is heightened and their enduring place in literature is secured. The first half of *Pamela*, for instance, *Jane Eyre*, *Anna Karenine*, are all highly sexed novels, and much of their interest depends upon this. After reading a novel of this kind, one is apt to feel that no great novel can be written unless it does introduce this element of passion. If any one thinks this, it is worth his while reading first *Jane Eyre*, and then Jane Austen's *Emma*—the one as devoid of passion as the other is conspicuous for it. Thackeray's novels are great without passion. So you realize that there is no law to the great novelists, and that, while some of the greatest of them seem to have thought it necessary to deal with that vast problem in human

nature in their books, there are others who have made little use of it, and who yet—as Jane Austen and Thackeray have done—achieve their prominent places as securely as the others. Jane Austen is to me the greatest wonder amongst novel writers. I do not mean that she is the greatest novel writer, but she seems to me the greatest wonder. Imagine, if you were to instruct an author or an authoress to write a novel under the limitations within which Jane Austen writes ! Supposing you were to say, ‘ Now, you must write a novel, but you must have no heroes or heroines in the accepted sense of the word. You may have naval officers, but they must always be on leave or on land, never on active service. You must have no striking villains ; you may have a mild rake, but keep him well in the background, and if you are really going to produce something detestable, it must be so because of its small meannesses, as, for instance, the detestable Aunt Norris in *Mansfield Park* ; you must have no very exciting plot ; you must have no thrilling adventures ; a sprained ankle on a country walk is allowable, but you must not go much beyond this. You must have no moving descriptions of scenery ; you must work without the help of all these ; and as to passion, there must be none of it. You may, of course, have love, but it must be so carefully handled that very often it seems to get little above the temperature of liking. With all those limitations

you are to write, not only one novel, but several, which, not merely by popular appreciation, but by the common consent of the greatest critics, the greatest literary minds of the generations which succeed you, shall be classed among the first rank of the novels written in your language in your country.' Of course, it is possible to say that Jane Austen achieves this, though her materials are so slight, because her art is so great. Perhaps, however, so long as the materials are those of human nature, they are not slight.

Another class of novel depending not so much for interest upon development of character is that of adventure, novels of the Homeric kind, such as those of Dumas, for instance—*Monte Cristo* and the whole series of *The Three Musketeers*. They give a pleasure of a different kind from the pleasure we take in the novels of character, but it is a kind by no means to be overlooked or neglected, and it may be a very great pleasure. There is a story told—I forget where I came across it, and I have never been able to verify it—of a man of the world in middle life, not liable to youthful enthusiasms, who one evening fell to reading *Monte Cristo*. His wife retired to bed at the usual time. He sat up reading, and in the small hours of the night he suddenly burst into his wife's room, who knew nothing at all about the book, and informed her in a transport of enthusiasm that Dantes had escaped from the Château d'If. The

pleasure these novels of adventure give is one to be cultivated ; they are a great class of novels.

Then there is a third category that suggests itself to me—the novels which depend on their humour for their permanency and the delight which they give. *Pickwick*, of course, is an instance. On this I would observe that the quality of humour and wit—though all of it which is brilliant of every kind may excite our admiration or give us pleasure at the moment—must, if it is to be enduring, be humour which is innocent and clean. I would like to suggest to you an example. I think it comes to this : any pleasure to be lasting, so that we wish to return to it and to think of it again and again, must have its hold, not only upon the intellect, but upon the affections. There is a great deal of humour and wit which appeals only to the intellect, but gets no hold on the affections. It has its brilliant success with us when we first meet it, but it does not abide with us and increase our pleasure as we go on in years. Let us compare *Tristram Shandy* with *The Sentimental Journey*. The same exquisite art is in both. *The Sentimental Journey* I have read with great entertainment more than once, but it is not lovable as is *Tristram Shandy*. *Tristram Shandy* always keeps its fresh hold upon our affections. Why is this ? There are conversations and situations in *Tristram Shandy* which live and endure, and are a perpetual delight to succeeding generations because of the endearing

innocence and simplicity with which Uncle Toby is intruded into them. Uncle Toby is the antiseptic which has kept, and always will keep, *Tristram Shandy* a fresher book than *The Sentimental Journey*.

I will only mention one or two other classes of books. There are the great histories and the great biographies. From the point of view of pleasure I would observe—and this I borrow from some past number of *The Times Literary Supplement*—that it is the biographies of literary men which are the most interesting. Next come the biographies of great soldiers, which are interesting from the point of view of the art of war. The dullest biographies of all are those of politicians. This is because the biography of a politician is apt to develop into an account of the politics in which he was concerned. The literary man, on the other hand, is not often concerned in public events, and those characters and aspects of his life which are selected for his biography are remarkable in the perspective, not only of his generation, but also in that of generations that come after. Think of the biographies most frequently quoted—Boswell's *Life of Johnson* pre-eminently; Lockhart's *Scott*; Moore's *Life of Byron*; all biographies of literary men.

Finally, I would say a word about books on Nature. It was suggested to me by this: When I was about two-and-twenty I read Kingsley's *Prose Idylls*, *Chalk Stream Studies*, *A Charm of Birds*, *My*

Winter Garden, and others. At that time in my life I should have put them in the very first rank of books about Nature. I preferred them at that time above White's *Selborne* or Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*. As years went on, I found the pleasure in White's *Selborne* and Walton's *Angler* increase more and more, and after some thirty years or so I read the *Prose Idylls* again, and I found that they had lost their charm for me. I am somewhat puzzled myself to know why, but I think I do know. This is worth while considering It is not merely that Izaak Walton and Gilbert White had greater art in literature than Charles Kingsley. Charles Kingsley was no mean writer ; he knew how to write, he could write well. The real difference is that Kingsley, when writing about Nature, has not the quality of repose, that atmosphere of calm and contemplation, which is found in writers like Izaak Walton and Gilbert White. If books about Nature are to live, they must not be descriptions written at the moment of rapture ; they must be books written as the result of observation, which recall and convey the emotion after it has sunk into the mind. Wordsworth said that poetry was emotion recollected in tranquillity. I will not discuss how far this is true of poetry, but I think it is true for books on Nature. These should be the result of long observation, much feeling, and tranquillity, and then the effect upon the reader is one of calm and contemplation, and brings that

sense of leisure and repose for which, in these days, we are more and more grateful. The works of W. H. Hudson have this quality.

I will conclude with one or two general remarks on the pleasure of reading. Let us not neglect as we grow older the pleasure of re-reading books which we remember we liked when we were young, but which we have greatly forgotten and which we should like to read again. Some, as we have seen, will have lost their charm, but others we shall find more interesting than before. For instance, I read *Middlemarch* after an interval of about thirty years, because I remembered having liked it. The conclusion on re-reading it was that it must have been impossible in youth to have appreciated half its merit. I certainly got pleasure from reading it when I was young, but I got more pleasure on reading it again years afterward.

The great books have stood the test of time because they possess in an unusual degree the power of satisfying human needs, and giving sustained human pleasure; and it is a great mistake to let new literature divert us from reading the old. Isaac Disraeli says somewhere that great books lead us to a proper perspective and sense of the values of life. The sentence is something to this effect: 'He who is not familiarized with the finest passages of the finest writers will one day be mortified to observe that his best thoughts are their indifferent ones.'

This last word I would say on the pleasure of reading : It was Tennyson who said, 'I like these large still books.' It is the large still books that give the most abiding pleasure, but, if we are to read them and appreciate them, we must sometimes be still ourselves ; we must reach that calm and contemplative mood which makes us receptive of the best things in literature. Bacon, in his *Essay on Study*, says, 'Study is for delight, for ornament, and for ability. For delight its chief use is in privateness and retirement' ; and Walton, at the end of his most famous and beautiful book, puts simply this quotation :

Study to be quiet.

From *Falldon Papers*.

GIBBON
BY LYTTON STRACHEY

HAPPINESS is the word that immediately rises to the mind at the thought of Edward Gibbon : and happiness in its widest connotation—including good fortune as well as enjoyment. Good fortune, indeed, followed him from the cradle to the grave in the most tactful way possible ; occasionally it appeared to fail him ; but its absence always turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Out of a family of seven he alone had the luck to survive—but only with difficulty ; and the maladies of his childhood opened his mind to the pleasures of study and literature. His mother died ; but her place was taken by a devoted aunt, whose care brought him through the dangerous years of adolescence to a vigorous manhood. His misadventures at Oxford saved him from becoming a don. His exile to Lausanne, by giving him a command of the French language, initiated him into European culture, and at the same time enabled him to lay the foundations of his scholarship. His father married again ; but his stepmother remained childless and became one of his dearest friends. He fell in love ; the match was forbidden ; and he

escaped the dubious joys of domestic life with the future Madame Necker. While he was allowed to travel on the Continent, it seemed doubtful for some time whether his father would have the resources or the generosity to send him over the Alps into Italy. His fate hung in the balance ; but at last his father produced the necessary five hundred pounds and, in the autumn of 1764, Rome saw her historian. His father died at exactly the right moment, and left him exactly the right amount of money. At the age of thirty-three Gibbon found himself his own master, with a fortune just sufficient to support him as an English gentleman of leisure and fashion. For ten years he lived in London, a member of Parliament, a placeman, and a diner-out, and during those ten years he produced the first three volumes of his History. After that he lost his place, failed to obtain another, and, finding his income unequal to his expenses, returned to Lausanne, where he took up his residence in the house of a friend, overlooking the Lake of Geneva. It was the final step in his career, and no less fortunate than all the others. In Lausanne he was rich once more, he was famous, he enjoyed a delightful combination of retirement and society. Before another ten years were out he had completed his History ; and in ease, dignity, and absolute satisfaction his work in this world was accomplished.

One sees in such a life an epitome of the blessings

of the eighteenth century—the wonderful $\mu\eta\delta\acute{e}\nu$ $\ddot{\alpha}y\alpha\nu$ of that most balmy time—the rich fruit ripening slowly on the sun-warmed wall, and coming inevitably to its delicious perfection. It is difficult to imagine, at any other period in history, such a combination of varied qualities, so beautifully balanced—the profound scholar who was also a brilliant man of the world—the votary of cosmopolitan culture, who never for a moment ceased to be a supremely English ‘character.’ The ten years of Gibbon’s life in London afford an astonishing spectacle of interacting energies. By what strange power did he succeed in producing a masterpiece of enormous erudition and perfect form, while he was leading the gay life of a man about town, spending his evenings at White’s or Boodle’s or the Club, attending Parliament, oscillating between his house in Bentinck Street, his country cottage at Hampton Court, and his little establishment at Brighton, spending his summers in Bath or Paris, and even, at odd moments, doing a little work at the Board of Trade, to show that his place was not entirely a sinecure? Such a triumph could only have been achieved by the sweet reasonableness of the eighteenth century. ‘Monsieur Gibbon n’est point mon homme,’ said Rousseau. Decidedly! The prophet of the coming age of sentiment and romance could have nothing in common with such a nature. It was not that the historian was a mere frigid observer

of the golden mean—far from it. He was full of fire and feeling. His youth had been at moments riotous—night after night he had reeled hallooing down St. James's Street. Old age did not diminish the natural warmth of his affections ; the beautiful letter—a model of its kind—written on the death of his aunt, in his fiftieth year, is a proof of it. But the fire and the feeling were controlled and co-ordinated. Boswell was a Rousseau-ite, one of the first of the Romantics, an inveterate sentimentalist, and nothing could be more complete than the contrast between his career and Gibbon's. He, too, achieved a glorious triumph ; but it was by dint of the sheer force of native genius asserting itself over the extravagance and disorder of an agitated life—a life which, after a desperate struggle, seemed to end at last in darkness and shipwreck. With Gibbon there was never any struggle : everything came naturally to him—learning and dissipation, industry and indolence, affection and scepticism—in the correct proportions ; and he enjoyed himself up to the very end.

To complete the picture one must notice another antithesis : the wit, the genius, the massive intellect, were housed in a physical mould that was ridiculous. A little figure, extraordinarily rotund, met the eye, surmounted by a top-heavy head, with a button nose, planted amid a vast expanse of cheek and ear, and chin upon chin rolling downward. Nor was

this appearance only ; the odd shape reflected something in the inner man. Mr. Gibbon, it was noticed, was always slightly over-dressed ; his favourite wear was flowered velvet. He was a little vain, a little pompous ; at the first moment one almost laughed ; then one forgot everything under the fascination of that even flow of admirably intelligent, exquisitely turned, and most amusing sentences. Among all his other merits this obviously ludicrous egotism took its place. The astonishing creature was able to make a virtue even of absurdity. Without that touch of nature he would have run the risk of being too much of a good thing ; as it was there was no such danger ; he was preposterous and a human being.

It is not difficult to envisage the character and the figure ; what seems strange, and remote, and hard to grasp is the connection between this individual and the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. The paradox, indeed, is so complete as to be almost romantic. At a given moment—October 15, 1764—at a given place—the Capitoline Hill, outside the church of Aracoeli—the impact occurred between the serried centuries of Rome and Edward Gibbon. His life, his work, his fame, his place in the history of civilisation, followed from that circumstance. The point of his achievement lay precisely in the extreme improbability of it. The utter incongruity of those combining elements

produced the masterpiece—the gigantic ruin of Europe through a thousand years, mirrored in the mind of an eighteenth-century English gentleman.

How was the miracle accomplished? Needless to say, Gibbon was a great artist—one of those rare spirits, with whom a vital and penetrating imagination and a supreme capacity for general conceptions express themselves instinctively in an appropriate form. That the question has ever been not only asked but seriously debated, whether History was an art, is certainly one of the curiosities of human inaptitude. What else can it possibly be? It is obvious that History is not a science: it is obvious that History is not the accumulation of facts, but the relation of them. Only the pedantry of incomplete academic persons could have given birth to such a monstrous supposition. Facts relating to the past, when they are collected without art, are compilations; and compilations, no doubt, may be useful; but they are no more History than butter, eggs, salt and herbs are an omelette. That Gibbon was a great artist, therefore, is implied in the statement that he was a great historian; but what is interesting is the particular nature of his artistry. His whole genius was pre-eminently classical; order, lucidity, balance, precision—the great classical qualities—dominate his work; and his History is chiefly remarkable as one of the supreme monuments of Classic Art in European literature.

'L'ordre est ce qu'il y a de plus rare dans les opérations de l'esprit.' Gibbon's work is a magnificent illustration of the splendid dictum of Fenelon. He brought order out of the enormous chaos of his subject—a truly stupendous achievement! With characteristic good fortune, indeed, the material with which he had to cope was still just not too voluminous to be digested by a single extremely competent mind. In the following century even a Gibbon would have collapsed under the accumulated mass of knowledge at his disposal. As it was, by dint of a superb constructive vision, a serene self-confidence, a very acute judgment, and an astonishing facility in the manipulation of material, he was able to dominate the known facts. To dominate, nothing more; anything else would have been foreign to his purpose. He was a classicist; and his object was not comprehension but illumination. He drove a straight, firm road through the vast unexplored forest of Roman history; his readers could follow with easy pleasure along the wonderful way; they might glance, as far as their eyes could reach, into the entangled recesses on either side of them; but they were not invited to stop, or wander, or camp out, or make friends with the natives; they must be content to look and to pass on.

It is clear that Gibbon's central problem was the one of exclusion: how much, and what, was he to

leave out? This was largely a question of scale—always one of the major difficulties in literary composition—and it appears from several passages in the Autobiographies that Gibbon paid particular attention to it. Incidentally, it may be observed that the six Autobiographies were not so much excursions in egotism—though no doubt it is true that Gibbon was not without a certain fondness for what he himself called ‘the most disgusting of the pronouns’—as exercises on the theme of scale. Every variety of compression and expansion is visible among those remarkable pages; but apparently, since the manuscripts were left in an unfinished state, Gibbon still felt, after the sixth attempt, that he had not discovered the right solution. Even with the scale of the History he was not altogether satisfied; the chapters on Christianity, he thought, might, with further labour, have been considerably reduced. But, even more fundamental than the element of scale, there was something else that, in reality, conditioned the whole treatment of his material, the whole scope and nature of his History; and that was the style in which it was written. The style once fixed, everything else followed. Gibbon was well aware of this. He wrote his first chapter three times over, his second and third twice; then at last he was satisfied, and after that he wrote on without a hitch. In particular the problem of exclusion was solved.

Gibbon's style is probably the most exclusive in literature. By its very nature it bars out a great multitude of human energies. It makes sympathy impossible, it takes no cognisance of passion, it turns its back upon religion with a withering smile. But that was just what was wanted. Classic beauty came instead. By the penetrating influence of style—automatically, inevitably—lucidity, balance and precision were everywhere introduced ; and the miracle of order was established over the chaos of a thousand years.

Of course, the Romantics raised a protest. 'Gibbon's style,' said Coleridge, 'is detestable ; but,' he added, 'it is not the worst thing about him.' Critics of the later nineteenth century were less consistent. They admired Gibbon for everything except his style, imagining that his History would have been much improved if it had been written in some other way ; they did not see that, if it had been written in any other way, it would have ceased to exist ; just as St. Paul's would cease to exist if it were rebuilt in Gothic. Obsessed by the colour and movement of romantic prose, they were blind to the subtlety, the clarity, the continuous strength of Gibbon's writing. Gibbon could turn a bold phrase with the best of them—'the fat slumbers of the Church,' for instance—if he wanted to ; but he very rarely wanted to ; such effects would have disturbed the easy, close-knit, homogeneous surface of his work.

His use of words is, in fact, extremely delicate. When, describing St. Simeon Stylites on his pillar, he speaks of 'this last and lofty station,' he succeeds, with the least possible emphasis, merely by the combination of those two alliterative epithets with that particular substantive, in making the whole affair ridiculous. One can almost see his shoulders shrug. The nineteenth century found him pompous ; they did not relish the irony beneath the pomp. He produces some of his most delightful effects by rhythm alone. In the *Vindication*—a work which deserves to be better known, for it shows us Gibbon, as one sees him nowhere else, really letting himself go—there is an admirable example of this. 'I still think,' he says, in reply to a criticism by Dr. Randolph, 'I still think that an hundred Bishops, with Athanasius at their head, were as competent judges of the discipline of the fourth century, as even the Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford.' Gibbon's irony, no doubt, is the salt of his work ; but, like all irony, it is the product of style. It was not for nothing that he read through every year the *Lettres Provinciales* of Pascal. From this point of view it is interesting to compare him with Voltaire. The irony of the great Frenchman was a flashing sword—extreme, virulent, deadly—a terrific instrument of propaganda. Gibbon uses the weapon with far more delicacy ; he carves his enemy 'as a dish fit for the Gods' ; his mocking is aloof, almost

indifferent, and perhaps, in the long run, for that very reason, even more effective.

At every period of his life Gibbon is a pleasant thing to contemplate, but perhaps most pleasant of all in the closing weeks of it, during his last visit to England. He had hurried home from Lausanne to join his friend Lord Sheffield, whose wife had died suddenly, and who, he felt, was in need of his company. The journey was no small proof of his affectionate nature ; old age was approaching ; he was corpulent, gouty, and accustomed to every comfort ; and the war of the French Revolution was raging in the districts through which he had to pass. But he did not hesitate, and after skirting the belligerent armies in his chaise, arrived safely in England. After visiting Lord Sheffield he proceeded to Bath, to stay with his stepmother. The amazing little figure, now almost spherical, bowled along the Bath Road in the highest state of exhilaration. ‘I am always,’ he told his friend, ‘so much delighted and improved with this union of ease and motion, that, were not the expense enormous, I would travel every year some hundred miles, more especially in England.’ Mrs. Gibbon, a very old lady, but still full of vitality, worshipped her stepson, and the two spent ten days together, talking, almost always tête-à-tête, for ten hours a day. Then the historian went off to Althorp, where he spent a happy morning with Lord Spencer,

looking at early editions of Cicero. And so back to London. In London a little trouble arose. A protuberance in the lower part of his person, which, owing to years of characteristic *insouciance*, had grown to extraordinary proportions, required attention; an operation was necessary; but it went off well, and there seemed to be no danger. Once more Mr. Gibbon dined out. Once more he was seen, in his accustomed attitude, with advanced foresinger, addressing the company, and rapping his snuff box at the close of each particularly pointed phrase. But illness came on again—nothing very serious. The great man lay in bed discussing how much longer he would live—he was fifty-six—ten years, twelve years, or perhaps twenty. He ate some chicken and drank three glasses of madeira. Life seemed almost as charming as usual. Next morning, getting out of bed for a necessary moment, 'Je suis plus adroit,' he said with his odd smile to his French valet. Back in bed again, he muttered something more, a little incoherently, lay back among the pillows, dozed, half-woke, dozed again, and became unconscious—for ever.

From *Portraits in Miniature*.

JOHN BUNYAN¹

BY G. M. TREVELYAN, O.M.

‘As I walked through the wilderness of this world,
I lighted on a certain place, where was a Den, and I
laid me down in that place to sleep. And as I slept,
I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold *I saw*
a Man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with
his face from his own house, a Book in his hand, and a
great Burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him
open the Book, and read therein ; and as he read, he
wept and trembled ; and not being able longer to
contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying
“*What shall I do ?*” ’

Of all the works of high imagination which have enthralled mankind, none opens with a passage that more instantly places the reader in the heart of all the action that is to follow ; not Homer’s, not Milton’s, invocation of the Muse ; not one of Dante’s three great openings ; not the murmured challenge of the sentinels on the midnight platform at Elsinore —not one of these better performs the author’s initial task. The attention is at once captured, the

¹ A Commemorative Address delivered at Cambridge in the year 1928, being the three hundredth after John Bunyan’s birth.

imagination aroused. In these first sentences, by the magic of words, we are transported into a world of spiritual values, and impressed at the very outset with the sense of great issues at stake—nothing less than the fate of a man's soul.

Without prelude we find ourselves standing in the very centre of the business. Already we breathe the allegoric yet intensely human atmosphere of the book which, for all its power of vision, differs from the figurative poetry of Spenser and Shelley in being firmly planted in the real facts of human nature, and in the real social and economic surroundings of seventeenth-century England.

For the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* was not only a great writer and a powerful religious teacher ; he was also an Englishman who had mixed in all the common traffic of humanity—war, trade, marriage and fatherhood—who shrewdly observed his fellow-men and women, and was by no means devoid of humour. And so—as literary authorities tell us—he founded the English novel, though such was not his design as author, but only to win for Christ poor souls lost in the dark, as he himself had once been lost.

The people who talk about ‘art for art's sake’ and ‘the distracting influence of a moral purpose in art’ have never yet produced art on a par with Milton's or Bunyan's, and they never will. The greatest artists are even more interested in life than

in art. Art seems to them a something given, by which to interpret the significance of life.

Bunyan was not a mere religious enthusiast ; he was, however unconsciously, an artist as well. When he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* the first fierce paroxysm of his religious experience had waned, leaving him free to employ his art in recording his past tribulations. If poetry is, as has been said, 'emotion recollected in tranquillity,' no wonder *Pilgrim's Progress* is a great poem. The man who had believed for a year on end that he had committed the unpardonable sin, had some emotion to recollect. 'I can remember,' writes Bunyan, 'I can remember my fears and doubts and sad months, with comfort. They are as the head of Goliath in my hand.'

Now all this stands clearly out in these first pregnant sentences of the book. The first words clearly show us Bunyan in his two aspects, as the author and as the subject of the book ; the dreamer who is himself the dream. First we are told of the author : 'As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep. And as I slept I dreamed a dream.' And in the very next words we are shown Bunyan as the Pilgrim himself, of whom the tale is told. 'I dreamed, and behold I saw a Man.'

The dreamer and dream are one and the same man, but at two different stages of his life's pilgrimage.

The dreamer (which is, being interpreted, the author) can afford to exercise his art in tranquillity, for he has arrived safe in a spiritual haven—none the less if the material surrounding thereof be Bedford Jail. Thence he looks back at his former self, the man who stood in solitary places with a Book in his hand, crying lamentably, ‘What shall I do?’ That lonely, tragic figure is the Bunyan whom we know in *Grace Abounding*, the wonderful autobiography that we may regard as the raw material of the yet more wonderful allegory.

But that lonely figure, with the book and the burden and the lamentable cry, is not only Bunyan himself. It is also the representative Puritan of the English Puritan epoch, that epoch of which Bunyan was the most faithful mirror in literature, as Cromwell in action. When Bunyan was a young man, in the years that followed Naseby, Puritanism had come to its moment of greatest force and vigour, in war, in politics, in literature and in all aspects of national life. But the inner pulse of the machine that drove all that tremendous energy of construction and destruction ‘posting o’er land and ocean without rest,’ with consequences famous and notorious to all time ; the prime motive force of it all was just this lonely figure of the man in the first paragraph of the *Pilgrim’s Progress*—the poor man seeking salvation with tears, with no guide save the Bible in his hand. To the poor also the gospel was

preached, and, what is stranger, *by* the poor also was it preached. Multiply by tens of thousands that ‘Man clothed with rags, with . . . a Book in his hand, and a great Burden upon his back,’ and you have a force of tremendous potency, which has been one of the chief elements in the growth of modern England ; the force by means of which Oliver Cromwell and George Fox and John Wesley wrought their wonders, being men of a like experience themselves ; the force by alliance with which the more sceptical Whig aristocracy long bore rule in the island, and therewith balanced other forces, in that equipoise of freedom that has made modern England. During Bunyan’s youth this force of Puritan enthusiasm was running like lava burst from the pent volcano’s side over the whole land, overwhelming churches and lordships and kings. Later, after the Restoration, came a period of repression and reprisal, from which Bunyan in the prime of life was one of the chief sufferers. And finally, after the Revolution of 1688, the year Bunyan died, Puritanism found its assigned place in the life of England, was harnessed serviceably to the uses of the commonweal, and, whether as Nonconformity or as Evangelicalism in the pale of the Established Church, gave a tone to the domestic and commercial and philanthropic life of modern England. It was this same force of Puritanism that, in the world of imaginative creation, inspired the sterner half of

Milton's genius, and all of John Bunyan's genius except that part of him which was pure human.

Ever since the time of Wycliffe, the 'Man clothed with rags, with . . . a Book in his hand, and a great Burden upon his back,' had been an element in the religious life of England. It was a native element in our national life, not imported from abroad, but begun by Wycliffe's Lollards ; their Bible-reading is one of the scenes very rightly chosen to represent English history in the new cartoons in the House of Commons lobby.

But this element of popular Protestantism grew slowly, though steadily. In Tudor times it did not sweep England as it swept Scotland under John Knox. The Reformation that broke the bonds of Rome was effected in part by other forces—the anti-clericalism of a people tired of the predominance of priests, but not yet converted to a new religion ; the greed of kings and courtiers ; the pride of a nation no longer content to be governed from Italy or Spain. In Tudor times popular Protestantism was only one of the elements that made the Reformation, though it was the most essential element of all ; it stemmed the reaction of Mary's reign, and made the Protestant tradition of the island, by enduring those terrible martyrdoms. It was not the gentry or the spoilers of the monasteries, but clergy and cobblers and other poor men who were found ready to die at the stake by hundreds.

In Elizabeth's reign, this popular Protestantism, sheltered within certain limits by the new national Church and State, grew apace. But it was only the attempt of Laud to drive it out of the country or suppress it altogether that caused that memorable explosion of its latent forces in the midst of which Bunyan passed his youth.

Laud tried to enforce a principle that still has many to advocate it but no longer any to enforce it. Laud's principle was that the poor, being ignorant, should take their religion from the learned. But there are other elements in religion besides learning and tradition. There are the instincts of a man's own heart and soul, be he learned like Laud, or be his learning confined, like Bunyan's, almost to the Bible and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*. The answer to Laud's thesis was not the axe of the men who killed him in base revenge : the true confutation of Laud's contempt for unlearned religion lay in the lives and works of John Bunyan and George Fox. If the battle of Naseby had gone the other way, Laud's followers would have suppressed the future activities of young Bunyan and young Fox. We should have had no *Pilgrim's Progress* and no Quakers. Both Bunyan and Fox were products of that rapid seed-time and harvest of religious experiment that intervened between the battle of Naseby and the Restoration.

But this 'freedom of prophesying,' for which

had given time to the Puritan sects to take root in the island so that no subsequent persecution could eradicate them. And he had secured that the future of English Puritanism outside the Established Church would lie not with an orthodox Presbyterianism of the Scottish model, but in a variety of sects—Bunyan's own Baptists not least among them. Not with orthodox Calvinism, not wholly with Anglicanism in its many forms, did the future of English religion lie. There was a place, and a great place, secured for the spirit of John Bunyan's personal and congregational religion, of which 'the foundation is not a doctrinal system but a moral conception.'

But there are more things in *Pilgrim's Progress* than the most perfect representation of evangelical religion. You must remember it is not only a great religious tract, but has been hailed as the first English novel. The way of the Pilgrims, and the way of the reader withal, is cheered by the songs, the rural scenery, the tender and humorous human dialogues, which in the Second Part gain ground upon the sterner stuff. Christian seems to have made the way a little smoother or less awful for his wife and children after him. All the delightful machinery of life which accompanies the onward march of the Pilgrims perpetually reminds us what a wonderful place that old England was, now long vanished beyond recall, and almost beyond imagination. In

Pilgrim's Progress we taste the old rural life with its songs and country mirth, and we hear the sound of the English language already come to perfection and not yet desiled. It is in fact still in great measure the England of Shakespeare, but with Puritanism superadded. Autolycus might accost the Pilgrims on the footpath way and we should feel no surprise. Falstaff might send Bardolph to bid them join him in the wayside tavern.

The language of *Pilgrim's Progress* has two sources —first the Bible, and, secondly and no less, the pure, crisp, telling English then spoken by the common people. From that common source, indeed, the English translators of the Bible had drawn their power of words, alas irrecoverable in our day when a thousand distracting influences have marred common speech and writing in every class of society. ‘The vocabulary of *Pilgrim's Progress* is the vocabulary of the common people.’ Indeed, the turns of phrase that were then commonest are often not the least happy. ‘You have gone a good stitch, you may well be awearie.’ ‘A saint abroad and a devil at home.’ And finally, a remark of Greatheart’s to Honest, ‘By this I know thou art a cock of the right kind’ —a phrase savouring of the pastimes of Bunyan’s unregenerate days. Macaulay, in his essay on John Bunyan in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, has thus summed up Bunyan’s equipment as an author—‘A keen mother wit, a great command of

the homely mother tongue, an intimate knowledge of the English Bible, and a vast and dearly-bought spiritual experience.'

The country through which the Pilgrims travel, and the road along which they have to pass, is the countryside, the roads and lanes, of the English east Midlands, with which Bunyan was familiar. The sloughs, the robbers, and the other accidents and dangers of the road were real facts of life in the English seventeenth century, the classical period of bad roads, highwaymen and footpads. We must indeed except the dragons and giants ; but those too he got from no more alien source than *Sir Bevis of Southampton* and other old English ballads, legends and broadsides that used then to circulate among the common people, instead of the flood of precise newspaper information that kills the imaginative faculty in people to-day. Till his long prison life began, Bunyan, like his fellow-countrymen in general, had dwelt under the same rural influences as the youthful Shakespeare. Men and women were not then buried so deep in the heart of ugly towns that they could know neither beauty nor solitude.

Then even the town-dweller had the unspoiled beauty and solitude of nature within ten minutes' walk of his door. This fact goes far to account for the strength and imaginative quality of English religion, language, literature, thought and feeling in those days as compared with our own shallower

and more mechanical moods. In those days men were much left alone with Nature, with themselves, with God, as they too seldom are under modern conditions of life.

As Blake has said :

Great things are done when men and mountains meet.
These are not done by scurrying in the street.

This principle is true not only of the mountains that nursed Wordsworth's genius, but also of the far-stretched horizons of the drained fenland and of Cambridgeshire, over which the rising and the sinking sun and the glories of cloudbank were often watched by solitary men—Squire Cromwell for instance, and each of the yeomen farmers who became his Ironsides. In the boundless spaces of the East Anglian countryside each of these men had felt himself to be alone with God, before ever they came together to form a regiment. And that same principle is true of the flats, the lanes and the woodland denes of Bedfordshire, the nurse of Bunyan and of all the strivings and visions of his youth. In his middle age, which he spent in the 'den' of his prison, he translated them into *Pilgrim's Progress*.

One quality there is in that book which makes a great part of its charm—the cheerful endurance of suffering and injustice. Such endurance was a great feature of life for Puritan preachers and congregations for a quarter of a century after the

Restoration of 1660. Bunyan had his full measure of that experience, long years in prison for preaching, separated from a wife and family whom he loved. He bore it without flinching and without turning sour. Indeed the sweetness of his temper and the happiness of his outlook on life seem to have increased rather than diminished in jail. Doubtless he was calmed and elated by the thought that he was suffering like those of whose yet more terrible sufferings he read so often in the *Book of Martyrs*. That calm and joyous endurance of great wrongs was one of the inspirations of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

There is one fortunate minor circumstance about *Pilgrim's Progress* that has helped to make it one of the most universally accepted books for nearly three centuries past—it has no politics. That negative quality it shares with Shakespeare. Written in prison by a victim of Cavalier vengeance, it can be read with unalloyed pleasure by members of the Anglican communion no less than by inheritors of the Roundhead tradition. Whig and Tory have equally rejoiced in it : a hundred years ago Southey and Macaulay united to press its claims on the notice of the literary world. It is not a party book, nor even in a strict sense a denominational book, but a book which all Englishmen may read, and of which all Englishmen are proud. Bunyan, as some of his less happily conceived writings show, could be a

bitter and even scurrilous controversialist on doctrinal subjects. But he kept the spirit of controversy out of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and all through his life he turned a dead, indifferent eye on politics, even when politics put him in prison.

The only recorded political act of his life was its last act, and that was a negative act. He refused the tempting and flattering offers of James II to enter politics as the supporter of the royal policy of the day—the policy of tolerating and temporarily exalting the Puritan sects at the expense of the Church of England, in order the better to destroy the fundamental laws and the Protestant religion of the land. On that policy John Bunyan, for all that he had suffered from the Church of England, quietly and contemptuously turned his back. Giant Pope, whom he had reported as moribund in the First Part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, had become the formidable 'monster' of the Second Part, the dragon with seven heads and ten horns that made great havoc of children. John Bunyan was not the man to be deceived by the flattery of courtiers, or to be made the dupe of the Church of Rome.

A few months later the Revolution of 1688–1689 gave a great measure of liberty and peace to the religious life of the country, endowing the Protestant Free Churches with toleration on a legal and Parliamentary basis. But ere that happy event John Bunyan had been called to cross the Dark River,

and never did a braver or a more pure-hearted man obey that summons.

Here, after three hundred years, we meet to celebrate his birth ; and the world pays him homage. Seldom has there been such an exaltation of the humble and meek. He shines one of the brightest stars in the firmament of English literature. Yet he had no other ambition in anything he wrote save to turn poor sinners to repentance.

From Clio, a Muse ; and other Essays.

THE DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE¹

BY VIRGINIA WOOLF

'... ALL I desire is fame,' wrote Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. And while she lived her wish was granted. Garish in her dress, eccentric in her habits, chaste in her conduct, coarse in her speech, she succeeded during her lifetime in drawing upon herself the ridicule of the great and the applause of the learned. But the last echoes of that clamour have now all died away ; she lives only in the few splendid phrases that Lamb scattered upon her tomb ; her poems, her plays, her philosophies, her orations, her discourses—all those folios and quartos in which, she protested, her real life was shrined—moulder in the gloom of public libraries, or are decanted into tiny thimbles which hold six drops of their profusion. Even the curious student, inspired by the words of Lamb, quails before the mass of her mausoleum, peers in, looks about him, and hurries out again, shutting the door.

But that hasty glance has shown him the outlines

¹ *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, Etc.*, edited by C. H. Firth ; *Poems and Fancies*, by the Duchess of Newcastle ; *The World's Olio, Orations of divers Sorts Accommodated to Divers Places* ; *Female Orations* ; *Plays* ; *Philosophical Letters*, etc., etc.

of a memorable figure. Born (it is conjectured) in 1624, Margaret was the youngest child of a Thomas Lucas, who died when she was an infant, and her upbringing was due to her mother, a lady of remarkable character, of majestic grandeur and beauty 'beyond the ruin of time.' 'She was very skilful in leases, and setting of lands and court keeping, ordering of stewards, and the like affairs.' The wealth which thus accrued she spent, not on marriage portions, but on generous and delightful pleasures, 'out of an opinion that if she bred us with needy necessity it might chance to create in us sharking qualities.' Her eight sons and daughters were never beaten, but reasoned with, finely and gaily dressed, and allowed no conversation with servants, not because they are servants but because servants 'are for the most part ill-bred as well as meanly born.' The daughters were taught the usual accomplishments 'rather for formality than for benefit,' it being their mother's opinion that character, happiness, and honesty were of greater value to a woman than fiddling and singing, or 'the prating of several languages.'

Already Margaret was eager to take advantage of such indulgence to gratify certain tastes. Already she liked reading better than needlework, dressing and 'inventing fashions' better than reading, and writing best of all. Sixteen paper books of no title, written in straggling letters, for the impetuosity of

her thought always outdid the pace of her fingers, testify to the use she made of her mother's liberality. The happiness of their home life had other results as well. They were a devoted family. Long after they were married, Margaret noted, these handsome brothers and sisters, with their well-proportioned bodies, their clear complexions, brown hair, sound teeth, ' tunable voices,' and plain way of speaking, kept themselves 'in a flock together.' The presence of strangers silenced them. But when they were alone, whether they walked in Spring Gardens or Hyde Park, or had music, or supped in barges upon the water, their tongues were loosed and they made ' very merry amongst themselves, . . . judging, condemning, approving, commending, as they thought good.'

The happy family life had its effect upon Margaret's character. As a child, she would walk for hours alone, musing and contemplating and reasoning with herself of ' everything her senses did present.' She took no pleasure in activity of any kind. Toys did not amuse her, and she could neither learn foreign languages nor dress as other people did. Her great pleasure was to invent dresses for herself, which nobody else was to copy, ' for,' she remarks, ' I always took delight in a singularity, even in accoutrements of habits.'

Such a training, at once so cloistered and so free, should have bred a lettered old maid, glad of her

seclusion, and the writer perhaps of some volume of letters or translations from the classics, which we should still quote as proof of the cultivation of our ancestresses. But there was a wild streak in Margaret, a love of finery and extravagance and fame, which was for ever upsetting the orderly arrangements of Nature. When she heard that the Queen, since the outbreak of the Civil War, had fewer maids-of-honour than usual, she had 'a great desire' to become one of them. Her mother let her go against the judgement of the rest of the family, who, knowing that she had never left home and had scarcely been beyond their sight, justly thought that she might behave at Court to her disadvantage. 'Which indeed I did,' Margaret confessed ; 'for I was so bashful when I was out of my mother's, brothers', and sisters' sight that . . . I durst neither look up with my eyes, nor speak, nor be any way sociable, insomuch as I was thought a natural fool.' The courtiers laughed at her ; and she retaliated in the obvious way. People were censorious ; men were jealous of brains in a woman ; women suspected intellect in their own sex ; and what other lady, she might justly ask, pondered as she walked on the nature of matter and whether snails have teeth ? But the laughter galled her, and she begged her mother to let her come home. This being refused, wisely as the event turned out, she stayed on for two years (1643-45), finally going with the

Queen to Paris, and there, among the exiles who came to pay their respects to the Court, was the Marquis of Newcastle. To the general amazement, the princely nobleman, who had led the King's forces to disaster with indomitable courage but little skill, fell in love with the shy, silent, strangely dressed maid-of-honour. It was not 'amorous love, but honest, honourable love,' according to Margaret. She was no brilliant match ; she had gained a reputation for prudery and eccentricity. What, then, could have made so great a nobleman fall at her feet ? The onlookers were full of derision, disparagement, and slander. 'I fear,' Margaret wrote to the Marquis, 'others foresee we shall be unfortunate, though we see it not ourselves, or else there would not be such pains to untie the knot of our affections.' Again, 'Saint Germain is a place of much slander, and thinks I send too often to you.' 'Pray consider,' she warned him, 'that I have enemies.' But the match was evidently perfect. The Duke, with his love of poetry and music and play-writing, his interest in philosophy, his belief 'that nobody knew or could know the cause of anything,' his romantic and generous temperament, was naturally drawn to a woman who wrote poetry herself, was also a philosopher of the same way of thinking, and lavished upon him not only the admiration of a fellow-artist, but the gratitude of a sensitive creature who had been shielded and

succoured by his extraordinary magnanimity. ‘He did approve,’ she wrote, ‘of those bashful fears which many condemned, . . . and though I did dread marriage and shunned men’s company as much as I could, yet I . . . had not the power to refuse him.’ She kept him company during the long years of exile ; she entered with sympathy, if not with understanding, into the conduct and acquirements of those horses which he trained to such perfection that the Spaniards crossed themselves and cried ‘Miraculo !’ as they witnessed their corvets, voltoes, and pirouettes ; she believed that the horses even made a ‘trampling action’ for joy when he came into the stables ; she pleaded his cause in England during the Protectorate ; and, when the Restoration made it possible for them to return to England, they lived together in the depths of the country in the greatest seclusion and perfect contentment, scribbling plays, poems, philosophies, greeting each other’s works with raptures of delight, and confabulating, doubtless, upon such marvels of the natural world as chance threw their way. They were laughed at by their contemporaries ; Horace Walpole sneered at them. But there can be no doubt that they were perfectly happy.

For now Margaret could apply herself uninterrupted to her writing. She could devise fashions for herself and her servants. She could scribble more and more furiously with fingers that became

less and less able to form legible letters. She could even achieve the miracle of getting her plays acted in London and her philosophies humbly perused by men of learning. There they stand, in the British Museum, volume after volume, swarming with a diffused, uneasy, contorted vitality. Order, continuity, the logical development of her argument are all unknown to her. No fears impede her. She has the irresponsibility of a child and the arrogance of a Duchess. The wildest fancies come to her, and she canters away on their backs. We seem to hear her, as the thoughts boil and bubble, calling to John, who sat with a pen in his hand next door, to come quick, 'John, John, I conceive !' And down it goes—whatever it may be ; sense or nonsense ; some thought on women's education—' Women live like Bats or Owls, labour like Beasts, and die like Worms, . . . the best bred women are those whose minds are civilest ' ; some speculation that had struck her, perhaps, walking that afternoon alone—why ' hogs have the measles,' why ' dogs that rejoice swing their tails,' or what the stars are made of, or what this chrysalis is that her maid has brought her, and she keeps warm in a corner of her room. On and on, from subject to subject she flies, never stopping to correct, ' for there is more pleasure in making than in mending,' talking aloud to herself of all those matters that filled her brain to her perpetual diversion—of wars, and boarding-schools,

and cutting down trees, of grammar and morals, of monsters and the British, whether opium in small quantities is good for lunatics, why it is that musicians are mad. Looking upwards, she speculates still more ambitiously upon the nature of the moon, and if the stars are blazing jellies ; looking downwards she wonders if the fishes know that the sea is salt ; opines that our heads are full of fairies, ‘dear to God as we are’ ; muses whether there are not other worlds than ours, and reflects that the next ship may bring us word of a new one. In short, ‘we are in utter darkness.’ Meanwhile, what a rapture is thought !

As the vast books appeared from the stately retreat at Welbeck the usual censors made the usual objections, and had to be answered, despised, or argued with, as her mood varied, in the preface to every work. They said, among other things, that her books were not her own, because she used learned terms, and ‘wrote of many matters outside her ken.’ She flew to her husband for help, and he answered, characteristically, that the Duchess ‘had never conversed with any professed scholar in learning except her brother and myself.’ The Duke’s scholarship, moreover, was of a peculiar nature. ‘I have lived in the great world a great while, and have thought of what has been brought to me by the senses, more than was put into me by learned discourse ; for I do not love to be led by the nose, by authority, and

old authors ; *ipse dixit* will not serve my turn.' And then she takes up the pen and proceeds, with the importunity and indiscretion of a child, to assure the world that her ignorance is of the finest quality imaginable. She has only seen Des Cartes and Hobbes, not questioned them ; she did indeed ask Mr. Hobbes to dinner, but he could not come ; she often does not listen to a word that is said to her ; she does not know any French, though she lived abroad for five years ; she has only read the old philosophers in Mr. Stanley's account of them ; of Des Cartes she has read but half of his work on Passion ; and of Hobbes only 'the little book called *De Cive*,' all of which is infinitely to the credit of her native wit, so abundant that outside succour pained it, so honest that it would not accept help from others. It was from the plain of complete ignorance, the unilled field of her own consciousness, that she proposed to erect a philosophic system that was to oust all others. The results were not altogether happy. Under the pressure of such vast structures, her natural gift, the fresh and delicate fancy which had led her in her first volume to write charmingly of Queen Mab and fairyland, was crushed out of existence.

The palace of the Queen wherein she dwells,
Its fabric's built all of hodmandod shells ;
The hangings of a Rainbow made that's thin,
Shew wondrous fine, when one first enters in ;

The chambers made of Amber that is clear,
Do give a fine sweet smell, if fire be near ;
Her bed a cherry stone, is carved throughout,
And with a butterfly's wing hung about ;
Her sheets are of the skin of Dove's eyes made
Where on a violet bud her pillow's laid.

So she could write when she was young. But her fairies, if they survived at all, grew up into hippopotami. Too generously her prayer was granted :

Give me the free and noble style,
Which seems uncurb'd, though it be wild.

She became capable of involutions, and contortions and conceits of which the following is among the shortest, but not the most terrific :

The human head may be likened to a town :
The mouth when full, begun
Is market day, when empty, market's done ;
The city conduct, where the water flows,
Is with two spouts, the nostrils and the nose.

She similised, energetically, incongruously, eternally ; the sea became a meadow, the sailors shepherds, the mast a maypole. The fly was the bird of summer, trees were senators, houses ships, and even the fairies, whom she loved better than any earthly thing, except the Duke, are changed into blunt atoms and sharp atoms, and take part in some of those horrible manœuvres in which she delighted to marshal the universe. Truly, ‘my Lady Sanspareille hath a strange spreading wit.’ Worse still, without an

atom of dramatic power, she turned to play-writing. It was a simple process. The unwieldy thoughts which turned and tumbled within her were christened Sir Golden Riches, Moll Meanbred, Sir Puppy Dogman, and the rest, and sent revolving in tedious debate upon the parts of the soul, or whether virtue is better than riches, round a wise and learned lady who answered their questions and corrected their fallacies at considerable length in tones which we seem to have heard before.

Sometimes, however, the Duchess walked abroad. She would issue out in her own proper person, dressed in a thousand gems and furbelows, to visit the houses of the neighbouring gentry. Her pen made instant report of these excursions. She recorded how Lady C. R. 'did beat her husband in a public assembly'; Sir F. O. 'I am sorry to hear hath undervalued himself so much below his birth and wealth as to marry his kitchen-maid'; 'Miss P. I. has become a sanctified soul, a spiritual sister, she has left curling her hair, black patches are become abominable to her, laced shoes and Galoshoes are steps to pride—she asked me what posture I thought was the best to be used in prayer.' Her answer was probably unacceptable. 'I shall not rashly go there again,' she says of one such 'gossip-making.' She was not, we may hazard, a welcome guest or an altogether hospitable hostess. She had a way of 'bragging of myself' which frightened

visitors so that they left, nor was she sorry to see them go. Indeed, Welbeck was the best place for her, and her own company the most congenial, with the amiable Duke wandering in and out, with his plays and his speculations, always ready to answer a question or refute a slander. Perhaps it was this solitude that led her, chaste as she was in conduct, to use language which in time to come much perturbed Sir Egerton Brydges. She used, he complained, ‘expressions and images of extraordinary coarseness as flowing from a female of high rank brought up in courts.’ He forgot that this particular female had long ceased to frequent the Court ; she consorted chiefly with fairies ; and her friends were among the dead. Naturally, then, her language was coarse. Nevertheless, though her philosophies are futile, and her plays intolerable, and her verses mainly dull, the vast bulk of the Duchess is leavened by a vein of authentic fire. One cannot help following the lure of her erratic and lovable personality as it meanders and twinkles through page after page. There is something noble and Quixotic and high-spirited, as well as crack-brained and bird-witted, about her. Her simplicity is so open ; her intelligence so active ; her sympathy with fairies and animals so true and tender. She has the freakishness of an elf, the irresponsibility of some non-human creature, its heartlessness, and its charm. And although ‘they,’ those terrible critics who had

sneered and jeered at her ever since, as a shy girl, she had not dared look her tormentors in the face at Court, continued to mock, few of her critics, after all, had the wit to trouble about the nature of the universe, or cared a straw for the sufferings of the hunted hare, or longed, as she did, to talk to some one 'of Shakespeare's fools.' Now, at any rate, the laugh is not all on their side.

But laugh they did. When the rumour spread that the crazy Duchess was coming up from Welbeck to pay her respects at Court, people crowded the streets to look at her, and the curiosity of Mr. Pepys twice brought him to wait in the Park to see her pass. But the pressure of the crowd about her coach was too great. He could only catch a glimpse of her in her silver coach with her footmen all in velvet, a velvet cap on her head, and her hair about her ears. He could only see for a moment between the white curtains the face of 'a very comely woman,' and on she drove through the crowd of staring Cockneys, all pressing to catch a glimpse of that romantic lady, who stands, in the picture at Welbeck, with large melancholy eyes, and something fastidious and fantastic in her bearing, touching a table with the tips of long pointed fingers, in the calm assurance of immortal fame.

From *The Common Reader.*

DIARIES

BY WILLIAM RALPH INGE

THE motives for writing autobiographies are various. Sometimes, as we have seen recently, the writer is tempted by a big cheque. In other cases he or she is conscious of having had an interesting life, and wishes the public to share the interest. Some men—especially Deans, I regret to say—are raconteurs, and so fond of their own stories that they do not like to think that they may perish with them. The relief of the raconteur's family when the fifty-times-told tale is at last fixed in black and white, and presumably done with, must be immense.

Others have a grievance, and wish posterity to know why they were elbowed out of office, who was really responsible for the miscarriage of a military expedition, who was the real author of a literary or scientific discovery, and so on. Classical scholars have admired the dignity of Thucydides in not giving his own story of the reverse at Amphipolis, where he was commander.

Others again have left memoirs which they intended or hoped would be published after their deaths, and in which they have inserted as much

venom as they knew how, conscious that they themselves will not be able to be called to account, nor perhaps their victims to vindicate their reputation. I have no doubt that Creevey was one of these malicious diarists ; there is evidence that he thought his papers 'would be of great value' hereafter. Some of the worst parts of his journal have not been printed, and perhaps never will be. Mark Pattison's Memoirs were clearly intended to take a posthumous revenge upon the college which passed him over, very improperly it must be said, for the headship, and on certain people in the University of Oxford whom he disliked.

Sometimes the autobiography seems to be prompted by sheer vanity. Vanity, unlike pride, is a rather amiable foible ; a vain man is seldom unpopular, partly because he shows that he cares for the good opinion of others. But the vain man is essentially an actor. If he is not posing for others, he struts and smirks to gratify himself. As an auto-biographer he partially fails by telling too many lies. As Napoleon said of one of his colleagues, '*He lies too much. It is well to lie sometimes ; mais toujours, c'est trop.*'

It is impossible, for example, to know when Benvenuto Cellini is telling the truth. Did he really plant that knife so neatly in the nape of his enemy's neck ? Did another enemy really try to poison him with a powdered diamond, and did Benvenuto only

escape because the hired murderer, not being a conscientious man, pocketed the diamond and gave Cellini powdered glass instead? We shall never know. Cellini is a most amusing fellow, anyhow. It is good fun to have (vicariously, of course) an occasional complete holiday from all the Ten Commandments.

Colley Cibber was a very vain man, who is commonly supposed to be merely ridiculous. I do not see it; his autobiography is a very good book, which on the whole makes me like and respect the writer. Of the most famous of all autobiographies, Rousseau's *Confessions*, it is almost painful to speak. I doubt whether he lies much; his profoundly diseased nature makes him shameless, and he seems really to believe that his odious character was a very favourable specimen of human nature. Another vain autographer, whose ponderous book teems with unconscious humour, is the philosopher Herbert Spencer. This is a severely truthful portrait of a typically English character, analysed by himself with scientific accuracy. One puts it down with a great respect for the man, and with a wry smile.

John Stuart Mill wrote another scientific autobiography, partly with the object of tracing the effect on the character of the peculiar system of education applied to him by his father, that tremendous old gentleman James Mill. But we are

also amused by his laudations of his wife's wit and wisdom. The good lady clearly showed her wit by echoing her husband's wisdom.

Ruskin, Carlyle, and Renan have also told us much about their own early lives. Gibbon's autobiography pleases us because it is a perfect example of how a much limited man, by an extremely wise laying out of his life, can produce just that great thing which was in him to do. We laugh at the young gallant, who ' sighed as a lover but obeyed as a son ' ; but the laugh is at last on his side, for whoever made fewer mistakes in the conduct of life, assuming that the object of life is to plan something great and to achieve it ?

Religious meditations are another class of autobiography. One may hesitate whether to give the palm to Marcus Aurelius or to St. Augustine. The supreme merit of the Stoic Emperor's little book is that it was written, as he says, ' to himself.' It was not intended for any other eyes. This gives it a supreme sincerity which all can recognise ; and so important is bare sincerity in the spiritual life that his meditations are still read eagerly by all classes, in all faiths, and in all countries.

Augustine's *Confessions* is a greater book, but it was written for publication, long after the events which it describes. If we check it by the short, seldom read dialogues written at the time of his conversion, we see how treacherous memory is when

it plays upon our own past, especially on our own past thoughts.

Reminiscences are not the perfect autobiography. The present modifies the past by interpreting it. We want the text without the commentary. How did his life appear to the great man before he knew that he was great?

A diary ought to be a perfectly honest autobiography, written from day to day, and therefore as true as an uncensored war correspondence. We have already half forgotten our hopes and fears at various periods during the war, and we have wholly forgotten our state of mind in July, 1914. When we look back at our diaries (if we keep them) during any crisis of our lives, we shall have some surprises. We have come to tell the story differently to ourselves. We pride ourselves on our foresight, though what happened was a mere stroke of luck, and we narrowly escaped some disastrous decision.

And yet, are diaries above suspicion? Some men look forward to having their biographies written, and bequeath to their wives or best friends an edifying journal, in which they pose as much as they do at their dinner tables. Others reflect that they may have no opportunity of destroying their diaries, and are careful not to write in them anything that would distress their families. I am not thinking so much of what are politely called indiscretions, as of harsh judgments which may be highly characteristic of

the writer, confidential secrets told by others, and confessions of one's own faults. ('I am sometimes troubled,' said Boswell, 'by a disposition to stinginess.' 'So am I,' replied Johnson, 'but I do not tell it.') Even in the happiest marriage there may be a few reserves, and no man would willingly contemplate that these should be torn aside as his wife reads his diary the week after his death. It follows that even in a diary we cannot be sure of getting a full revelation of a man's character; and most people fill their journals with ephemeral details which have no permanent interest whatever.

If, however, a man writes a diary which he feels sure that nobody will ever see except himself, he is probably perfectly truthful. There is no motive for being otherwise. He is no more ashamed of recording his actions, good and bad, just as they happened, than of seeing himself in his bath. So down it all goes, as in the famous diary of Samuel Pepys, which he wrote in a cypher which he was confident that nobody would take the trouble to read. I know no other diary to be compared with it.

We are sometimes shocked, but more often amused. 'Went to church this morning. Excellent sermon, but distracted by back view of pretty girl in the pew in front. Offered her a hymn-book to make her turn round. Front view disappointing, and looked cross. Plate instead of offertory-bag.

Nuisance. Had to give half-a-crown. Must remember to put sixpences in my pocket.' That is a slightly modernised version of what we find everywhere in Pepys. It is a human—all too human—document, the record of what Matthew Arnold calls an 'average sensual man'; though we must remember, to do the volatile Samuel justice, that he lived in the most dissolute age of English history.

Leslie Stephen wanted everyone to leave his autobiography tied up with his will. I am afraid most of us would find the compilation rather embarrassing.

1922.

From *Lay Thoughts of a Dean*.

THE VILLAGE CHIMNEYS

BY EDMUND BLUNDEN

'ALL bright and glittering in the smokeless air' is a vision which I feel needs a little smoke to add to its beauty. Tulip-tinted into the fairest day rises the smoke from the homes of men, and at evening it is still an appeal to our simplest and sweetest instinct. Most alluring, perhaps, when it is from cottage chimneys, where still it announces without sentiment the plainest system of our existence. The hearth is the centre of that scheme of things. Its broad base is crowned with a broad and solid chimney ; then the rest may be said to fall into position, thatch, timber, and clay. The dominating hearths and chimneys of our older houses are not easy to destroy ; they are the real village. Thanks to them it comes about that one often has an aspect of a place such as an Elizabethan, or at least a contemporary of Milton, would feel to be quite of his world and time. I speak especially of the straight, rectangular brick chimney, without entering into the graces of ornament devised for manor houses, and, in the Victorian period, passed on to lodges and other modest dwellings. In countries where an

extended stove-pipe is the conduit of smoke, one cannot obtain the same impression of a village street, and a vigorous antiquity.

Those village streets ever command most admiration and recollection which contain many houses set back some way from the thoroughfare. ‘Accident, heightened by the taste of the proprietor of the estate,’ has given us such quietly charming irregularities, with many others which the setting brings at once to the eye. Here, a flagstone path leads through the wicket-gate to the porch ; there, bricks pave and border the path ; here, the garden is mainly a dark green lawn with its ovals and triangles of flowers ; and there it is a thrifty piece of cultivation with long lines of peas and beans, yet not so thrifty as to exclude the sunflower and hollyhock. One man has had a passion for hedges, another for low walls, another for palings, another for the cutting of the box-tree into shapes of pheasant or fox. Before one door stands a thatched well ; another has its little outpost of bee-houses ; a third, its dovecot ; the passer-by rejoices in the variety not merely of objects but of human enjoyments.

Happy that village which is built round a green, one of ample size, on which one may stand and look round on a circle of high oak and poplar between red and white cottages and farms and inns and all that has satisfied generation after generation, from church and chapel to forge and mill. How beauti-

fully, from such a centre, the tracks lead away through five-barred gates under colonnades of elms, or beside the ridges softly curved by the perpetual plough ! Here, too, when it is a day for cricket or football, or for the swings and roundabouts, there is a special sense of the village community ; all the houses have a share in the matter in hand, great and small forming one harmony, acknowledging one sympathy. In many places, too, a great tree stands in the middle of the little square, with its seats built beneath its broad canopy as a constant and general invitation to leisure and talk. Gilbert White, the good parson, delighted to dream of such a tree at Selborne : ‘ a vast oak, with a short, squat body, and huge horizontal arms extending almost to the extremity of the area. This venerable tree, surrounded with stone steps, and seats above them, was the delight of old and young, and a place of much resort in summer evenings ; where the former sat in grave debate, while the latter frolicked and danced before them.’ We do not only see with the eye, and, since these old Druidical fathers of the village are not all overturned by gales or felled by modern needs, we hear when we come towards them, clearer than the rattle of the lorry bumping round the corner, a tune of frolic and dance.

Far be it from me to rush in with a selection of the prettiest village in England. There are those who would say Manchester. Impassioned friends insist

on—we name no names—in the Cotswolds. I am not sure whether the sea is a deciding factor ; certainly it is wonderful to look along the highway, between walls that festoon themselves in tendrilled greenness and purple bells and throw up botanical sunbeams and cloudlets of vermeil and samite, upon the quays and painted boats and sands and crags and the summer sea. Or, when the scene is utterly changed, it rouses one from one's littleness to leave the houses a few yards behind and take the surprise of some sheer, black-burnt gorge, and beyond the cold, racing mass of the world of waters, hounding some nearer reef or bar, but out there only looking to be assaulting the oceanic sky. The evenings in some parlour, overlooking the black harbour with its few trembling gems of light, while the loud sweep of the wind is heard dim outside, and inside, freshened with the sharp rain we bring on our faces, we talk the hours away—these intimacies are to be treasured. You may say, not as scenery ; but the imagination at such times draws a full scene from the glance through the night and then into the crimson caverns and gorges of the fire.

From *The Face of England*.

MISTS AND FOGS

BY EDMUND BLUNDEN

I SAW a wanderer, who had been daring enough to begin writing a letter to his far home from the Reading Room of the British Museum. It was a long letter, and apparently descriptive of his new surroundings. I found myself conjecturing what kind of report he was writing.

' We arrived in London. The street lamps were mere dewdrops of white light in the aerial mud, which spread through all thoroughfares. The inhabitants even, who have an instinctive ingenuity of movement and traffic in this turbid effluvia, seemed eager to protest that the weather was more than commonly bad. During the succeeding days, about noon, a certain yellowness in the vapour overhead was observable, and the upper windows of buildings were visible, though not much more cheerful to us than the eye-holes of a skeleton to one in a haunted chamber. A native, who waited upon us at table, with the perfidiousness ascribed time out of mind to his countrymen, recommended us to seek the rays of the sun and the generous colours of a less malevolent Nature in the province where he was born. His

advice was supported by several coloured pamphlets indicating scenes of singular brightness and perpetual spring.

' We therefore, at considerable expense, travelled by railway out of London towards these alleged scenes. The very luxuriousness and super-heating of the carriage which conveyed us displayed not merely the skill and resources of the English, but also their pessimistic conception of their climate. The fact that we had left London was not easy to ascertain, for nothing could be made out through the windows except the lights of stations. At length we reached Exeter, and were just able to assure ourselves that the rumour of a cathedral existing in this city was correct. Passing onward, we were finally conducted to our lodgings, and informed that a change of wind was occurring, which would afford us wide views of land and water, under a blue sky. The next day, it is true, the wind had changed ; it dashed against our windows with fury, hurling steely bursts of water against them, and whipping the trees into a dreary kind of motion ; whence, it is possible, the islanders conceived the notion of Morris dances, so laboriously reported to foreigners. There were here trees with leaves, called evergreens, but the name reminded us how even colours are relative ; to our eye, in the words of the immortal Shakespeare, the foliage was " a sable silvered." A philologist of our party decided that here at last he had found out

the meaning of the cant term, "The All-Blacks." To console themselves for the frequent disappearance of their admired shrubberies and "quaint old timbered cottages" in the shroud of the storm, the inhabitants have perfected an excellent liquor called cider, and we were invited to return at the season when the apples from which this is fermented are still a veil of rosy-white bloom and fragrance under crystal sunshine ; but this we could not wait for.'

A pity, my wanderer. We understand you. How many of us spend our lives in escaping from the home of the fog-signal to whatever of actuality and topography exists in.

Dance, and provençal song, and sunburnt mirth ! How many of us agree that landscape in England, like war in Flanders, is a summer sport ! We admit that it is not always easy to *see* England. But the classical legend that we all commit suicide at last because of this disadvantage is erroneous, nor was the British Empire the result of our wet summers and melancholy winters. The sleet-storm, which, while I write, makes the great tiled flank of the barn gleam like newly cut lead, and sends the tradesman scurrying across the empty street, has its pearls.

Constant sun, and 'unpavilioned heavens,' and incessant brilliance of outline, are personal topics. Your pike-fisher will not readily exchange his season's bleakness and brief days for them. Nor would I be without the alternations of the English

year. I do not much study either the Rules of the Shepherd of Banbury, or the weather forecasts, or the reports of the worst or best performances of the clerk of the weather since 1837. ‘Awful,’ I echo with momentary feeling when some of us are standing under a tin roof at the Oval, watching the rivers swell and bubble between us and the prospect of any more cricket. I am almost hardened to this kind of conversation, ‘Yes, if the weather hadn’t broken, I was going to take you to Four Counties’ Hill. It was marvellous last week. We *should* be able to see the spire of Hunton Canonicorum at the end of this avenue, the most graceful thing it is. What a shame! Too wet; those three Oriental plane-trees would have fascinated you . . .’ (I am not attempting to rival, or plagiarize, Miss Ruth Draper on the English lady and her garden). Let us be as just as we can to experience and the clerk of the weather. Look into your recollections, and answer me, if you do not find there some wonderful intimacies begotten out of our seasons’ seemingly loveless moods.

I see the brown breadth of ploughlands, dimmed with the flying grey wings of rainstorm. Ash and elm rise towards the dusky day, like rafters from a burned house. Black droves of rooks pass over, and, like a handful of chaff thrown out, the linnets flit along the hedge, and sparrows cross from stack to hovel. The bus with its footballers halts here, and

the home field is soon made active with them—the hedger and ditcher who watches lights his fire ; and my heart, not at all regretting that there are no daffodils to dance with, is set free with rains. and rooks, and linnets, and labourers, and the girl who comes from the dairy to the group around the fire.

Again it is winter, and the gale has strength almost to carry a human body up the hill to the church, whose bells are heard as bells from under the sea, whose windows glow against the ember-light of sunset ; against that dark gold, like work of an Eastern carver latticing a temple corridor, the thorn hedge suddenly becomes a design, set against a mystery. A few steps more, and the small lights of this life are seen crossing the moorland, and the cloud of night is softened with the emanation from market-place and inn ; sadness knows no gentler emblems of mortal coming and going ; are these the lights of the Roman dispatch-rider, the British village ?

Even the London fog has the power of ceasing to be mere weather and scene, and becoming an emotion or a fantasy without which our lives would be poorer. Dickens, in the first pages of *Bleak House*, has shown what a spectre, a host of spectres, it is ; and there is in us the answering spectre. We may and do complain of the discomfort and danger of the vast invader, the shadow of ‘ the last days ’ ; we do our utmost now to prevent its reappearances.

Yet when the enemy lays siege afresh, and the other side of the road is hidden as completely as a vault, and the peculiar blackness has descended as though to play an unearthly joke upon our regular habits, and even the brightest of our lights look like a clever imitation of light in wax, and old buildings seem to know more about the subject than new, we are moved as by the apparition of all ancient monsters. It is our own dragon, breathing anti-fire. How willingly he lies, this creature out of a sky that yesterday domed Paul's dome in a gold-fretted infinity, how insistently without violence he insinuates himself round and through all our chimneys and courtyards ! He is deathly, but we are old enough to have seen strange shapes, and to keep our eyes open even in the worst moments. The real death is when impressions cease. Come, monster. At his coming, as I hinted, many a time-worn, unhandsome piece of London assumes an influence (to use the word on the metaphysical side) ; the images of the past hover in their proper gigantic gloom, and the texture of all our fabrics seems to submit to a temporary metamorphosis.

Water-mist in late summer also steals into our lives, not with the sublimity of the smoke-giant, but with a persistent fairy presence. It swims and gleams about the sides of our hills, which then appear as the backs of whales sleeping on the flood ; it capriciously mocks us with the tops of bushes and

bridges, and cattle in its moonlight blueness are encountered unexpectedly as Caliban was by Trinculo. It appears as a bank or dune of slow softness—and avoids our contact. In the early day, it seems to put forth pale-sleeved arms and coiling fingers about the weir-pool. The hand that in legend went up from the lake to receive the whirling sword of Arthur was this one. The end of many honied days is mingled in this cold, fluent, beautiful, elusive exhilaration, this web, this wave, this wreath.

From *The Face of England*.

THE YEOMAN FARMER

BY ARTHUR BRYANT

IN the yeoman farmer, we have reached what I believe to be the central point of our search for the English character. For the yeoman farmer (using the word in its broadest sense) is the common ancestor of nearly every Englishman. Not all of us perhaps have the blood of squires, parsons or craftsmen in our veins, but all of us, unless we are of pure foreign descent or have had the unusual privilege of descending to earth from Heaven, possess yeoman blood ; and that blood I think we may call the measure of our common Englishry. Perhaps the best answer that any Englishman could give to the question 'Who were the yeomen, the yeomen of England ?' would be 'My great-great-great-grandparents.' And this is still true, even though most of us to-day are townsmen and the sons of townsmen. For two centuries ago there were scarcely any real townsmen in England, and even those who lived in towns earned half their livelihood by farming and gardening in the surrounding countryside, as they still do in one little East Anglian town I know. And as far more of our long line of

ancestors were farmers than townsmen (a fact we are apt to forget), the deeper we go down into our national character—cutting through the crust, as it were, of a century of town life—the more surely do we find the yeoman. Canada, New Zealand, Australia and British South Africa, as well as modern Britain, owe their being to the character and habits of a little nation of stubborn, independent yeomen farmers.

I am using the word yeoman in its widest sense, to include all those who earned their living from the soil and had some control over the land they cultivated. In this sense there were two essential attributes of the yeoman—that he cultivated the ground and that he was independent. I don't mean completely independent—for by no means all yeomen were freeholders, and many were such small fry that they had to add to their earnings by a few days of hired labour on somebody else's ground. But, compared with the modern wage-earner or even the modern salary earner (say an eminent civil servant) they were independent—because no one could lawfully deprive them of the means of earning their bread. A man who has that right, however scanty and hard-earned that bread may be, is a freeman : he may look the whole world in the face and speak out his mind without fear or favour. And the thing that most used to impress foreigners about England was that we were a nation of freemen. That, I

think, was a very glorious thing to be. And even if we are a nation of freemen (in this broad sense) no longer, we are at least the descendants of freemen, and the love of liberty runs through our veins.

I want for a moment to hark back to the life of the primitive village in which our yeomen forefathers lived. Around the village were the great arable fields—often several hundred acres in extent—in which the villagers had their strips of land : one or more in each of the great fields according to their rank and status. These strips were cultivated according to immemorial usage controlled by the manorial court—that is, the agricultural court of the Lord of the Manor, which was guided in matters of disputed fact by a jury of villagers. The cultivation of the land was partly communal : the right to enjoy its fruits individual and personal. I am not at all certain that our curious genius in modern times for evolving institutions half public and statutory and half individual and private is not derived from this far-away method of agriculture. Certainly for hundreds of years it was practised by our ancestors.

In addition to the village arable fields with their strips—they must have looked rather like a vast modern allotment—there was the village hayfield, in which each of the villagers had his strip or strips and where, after the hay was taken up, he had the right to pasture his cattle. And beyond these fields

eeurs, and kurnuls ; and I nivver yit sin big eeurs wi fat kurnuls an short straa, and nobody else nivver did. When carn is sold by weight, ant it better to taiak a peck out a the sack, then put a peck in ? That's the difference atween good and bad farmin. You must a cleean land, plenty a dress, and plenty a laiabour to git th' increeas, and when ye a got these, the increeas comes. And what cleleans the land like a good plough-sheear ! How it turns the ground ovur and distroys all the rubbish, ispecially when ye a got a good man behind the plough. I a bin a-reeading out a the "Ole Book" jest afuur you come in, and it says the "time ull come when all the suurds and speears shull be turned into ploughshears and pruning hooks." Then all the docks and the curlook and the cockuls and the thissuls and the nettuls and ivvery other kind a rubbish ull be destroyed. Then THE LAND ULL BE CLEEEAN, and not only that, all malice and haitred and covetousness ull be driven frum men's hearts. That ull be a happy time for ivverybody, and it ull be shu-ur to come—the "Ole Book" says so—but I shan't live to see it. Ah ! that wull be a blessed time ! Thaiur ull be good mahsters ivverywheer wi plenty a laiabour an the farm. The laiabours ull git good waiges while the mahster gits the increeas. His yard ull be full a stock—ivvery carner an it—and his grinneries full a graian. His feulds, ivvery one an em, ull be well dressed, fur he's got plenty a dung : then thaiur ull be plenty fur ivverybody, fur the increeas is shuur to follur.'

Anyone who misses the almost passionate love of the old rustic for the hard earth from which he had so laboriously wrung a living must be either deaf or blind.

And often to-day as I travel about our country I find myself reminded of that glowing passage in which Cobbett speaks of one trait of our English peasantry—‘ that most interesting of our objects that is such an honour to England and that which distinguishes it from all the rest of the world, namely, those neatly kept and productive little gardens round the labourers’ houses, which are seldom undecorated with more or less of flowers. We have only to look at these to know what sort of people English labourers are.’

I am not trying to paint the picture of an idyllic age. The era of the free English rustic was not an easy one. If the earth of England was his mother, she gave him rough fare and hard work to earn it. The standard of living and hours of working of an English yeoman of three centuries ago would probably not do for us to-day. Nor, I imagine, would his stay-at-home life. Our forefathers seldom left their native village, and when they did so, they hardly ever went beyond the nearest market or assize town. Everything depended on locality and neighbourhood ; what mattered to them was the state of the crops in the big field under Windmill Hill, or what Mrs. Jones across the way or Hume the blacksmith said ; to them all this counted for much more than the distant utterances of kings and parliaments. Outside their own little world everything was just a blank ; a man from a neighbouring county was a

market town of Stratford-on-Avon. His mother was the daughter of a small Warwickshire farmer. He was educated at a little country grammar school, and received all his early impressions—the ones that last—from the ways and talk of country folk. And when he wrote his plays it was their world that he enshrined—Silence and Shallow talking of sheep and bullocks on the Cotswold hills, Bottom the weaver and his friends sporting their English country mumming among the Athenian princes, Autolycus the pedlar carrying his wares and his merry heart across the shires. Even in his first play, ‘Love’s Labour’s Lost,’ Shakespeare in one glorious song showed how well he knew his rustic England—the England of the yeoman of whose culture he was the greatest exponent.

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp’d and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 Tu-whit ;
Tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson’s saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian’s nose looks red and raw,

When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 Tu-whit ;
Tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

With the enclosures of the later eighteenth century the golden age of the English yeomanry came to an end. It is a sad story, and one that I am rather glad that I haven't to tell. That glorious old bully of all that was mean and unmanly, Cobbett—the last of the great yeomen—struggled hard in the midst of an age of enclosures and falling agricultural wages to preserve the free bucolic England of his youth. It was in the nature of things that he should fail, but in doing so he at least left us the picture—a little tinted doubtless by the mists of recollection—of that old England. ‘All of you,’ he wrote, ‘who are over sixty years of age can recollect that bread and meat and not wretched potatoes were the food of the labouring people ; you can recollect that every industrious labouring man brewed his own beer and drank it by his own fireside ; you can recollect that at every wedding and at every christening such labouring men had a barrel of ale in the house ; you can recollect when the young people were able to provide money before they were married to purchase decent furniture for a house and had no need to go to the parish to furnish for them with a miserable nest to creep into ; . . . you can recollect

when a bastard child was a rarity in a village and when husbands and wives came together without the disgrace of being forced together by the parish magistrates and officers ; you can recollect that every sober and industrious labourer that was a married man had his Sunday coat, and took his wife and children to church all in decent apparel ; you can recollect when the young men did not shirk about on Sunday in ragged smock frocks and unshaven faces with a shirt not washed for a month and with their toes peeping out of their shoes, and when a young man was pointed at on a Sunday if he had not a decent coat upon his back, a good hat on his head, a clean shirt with a silk handkerchief round his neck, leather breeches without a spot, whole worsted stockings tied under the knee with a red garter, a pair of handsome Sunday shoes which it was deemed almost a disgrace not to have fastened under his feet with silver buckles. There were always some exceptions to this, some lazy, some drunken, some improvident young men ; but I appeal to all those of you who are sixty years of age whether this be not a true description of the labourers of England when they were boys.'

The England of the early nineteenth century, with its squalid dispossessed peasantry and its yeomen trudging townwards to found a new prosperity in cotton or bricks and mortar, had another picture to show. ' Go,' writes a writer in the *Annals of*

Agriculture, ‘to an ale house kitchen of an old enclosed country and there you will see the origin of poverty and poor rates. For whom are they to be sober? For whom are they to save? For the parish? If I am diligent shall I have leave to build a cottage? If I am sober shall I have land for a cow? If I am frugal shall I have half an acre of potatoes? You offer me no motives; you have nothing but a parish officer and a workhouse. Bring me another pot.’ It was the only answer left to the English agriculturist when he had lost both his prosperity and his independence.

None the less, in an attenuated form in the country and respectfully hidden under the substantial frock-coated figures of merchants and manufacturers in the new towns, the yeoman character of England survived, and it is still a factor to be reckoned in estimating the prejudices and policy of England. One of its chief attributes was a certain stubborn clinging to known facts and a distrust of anything unproved—a conservatism which is nearly always to be found in peasant folk. One is forced to respect facts if one is dependent for one’s daily bread on the hard realities of Nature.

‘Bite your bread and smell your cheese,’ was the cautious advice that Cobbett’s farmer grandfather gave him—and I have many times noticed how often our English humour seems to turn on some unexpected collision between something rather grand and

high-falutin and the hard sober impact of reality. I mean a pompous old gentleman slipping on an orange peel, or Jorrocks' huntsman Pig, rising from dinner to look out of the window and report the state of the night, and stepping straight into the larder cupboard whence he issued his astonishing weather report of 'Black as hell and smells damnably of cheese.' Certainly what counts in England is always the logic of facts and events, never that of ideas. We are always appealing from the latter to the former—especially in our law, where our rule is to be governed not by principles but by precedents. This is exactly what might be expected of a rustic people. And our most popular statesmen have always been opportunists.

This stubborn adherence to fact has tended to make us very literal in our speech. Though in other matters not much distinguished by moral courage, the Englishman seldom flinches from speaking the truth when the alternative is to tell a literal lie. We have always had a singular contempt for a liar in England—a contempt which many other peoples neither share nor even understand. We have also always tended to dislike exaggeration and overstatement. I recall one old Cheshire farmer who, sitting on the platform during the unveiling of a War Memorial in a village where the young men had been notoriously late in joining up, ruined the principal speaker's peroration by commenting in a

matter-of-fact aside, ‘None of ‘em went until ‘a was pooshed.’ But I am not certain that this yeoman hatred of falsehood and exaggeration is not diminishing in modern England: our popular press is certainly increasingly free of it, and to read the advertisements of the newest books in the more high-brow Sunday papers is a task so bewildering to a literal-minded man that I can only assume that literal-mindedness is dying out among our educated classes.

But the greatest of all the yeoman virtues is our love of independence. This splendid and civic quality—for such I am old-fashioned enough to believe it to be—we inherit without question from our yeoman fathers. And a hard, stubborn, liberty-loving lot they were. ‘If you offer them work,’ complained an angry would-be employer of our eighteenth century yeoman peasantry, ‘they will tell you that they must go to look up their sheep, cut furzes, get their cow out of the pound or, perhaps, say they must take their horses to be shod that he may carry them to a horse race or a cricket match.’ Very annoying for the would-be employer, no doubt, but then splendid for England. It was not the spirit of subservience that kept the squares at Waterloo or manned the guns at Trafalgar, nor, I may add, held the salient at Ypres. And though to-day I know it seems to some as though the contending forces of joint stock Capitalism and Socialist bureaucracy had

between them almost extinguished the last vestiges of English liberty, I do not believe that our yeoman passion for freedom can be killed so easily. For I do not hold that our character is really changing very quickly—and I am more than inclined to echo Disraeli's reply to the contemptuous opponent who asked him in the House where were the freemen of Bucks to-day? ‘Where you would expect to find them, of course, in the county of Buckinghamshire.’

Yet though that is still true of the yeoman character, it is of course no longer true of the yeoman's holding.

Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay :
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade ;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made ;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied.

As I have said before, we mostly destroyed ours by the enclosures of the eighteenth century and the urbanization of the nineteenth century. And in the long run I believe that a nation if it is to remain strong and healthy must have a prosperous and contented agriculture: otherwise, however rich its urban population may be, it is, in the phrase of a great Venetian, like an eagle with one wing. And I should like to suggest that all who are interested in the future of this country, whether they live in town or in country, should consider the truth or

reverse of this belief, and how far agricultural life is necessary, not only economically but also spiritually, to the well-being and sanity of a nation.

And then perhaps they might go on to discuss the even more vital question of whether it would be possible to recreate in England a landed yeomanry and peasantry, and the ways by which it might be done. It does look as though the older landed system of the country has almost broken down, and, on the principle that dawn is nearest when it is darkest, it may well be argued that there is a chance to-day of rebuilding a strong rural England that has not existed for a hundred years. An interesting illustration for discussion would be George Wyndham's great achievement—at least so it always seems to me—in restoring a free peasantry in the depressed districts of Western Ireland by a policy of establishing small-holders on government farms and transforming them into freeholders after the payment of so many years rent.

Sentimentality is said to be an English failing—and some may feel that in my admiration for our rough old yeoman type I fall heavily into that sin. And if to be proud of one's forefathers and to honour their homely virtues is sentimentality, I must plead guilty.

As I think, there passes across my mind a long line of English yeomen—my stalwart neighbour across the way whose cows so often keep me awake in the

little Buckinghamshire village where I live, the sunburnt farmers of the Fenland who made such magnificent medieval knights in a pageant I once had the good luck to produce there ; the Wiltshire farmer and erstwhile prize-fighter who taught me to box in his orchard when I was a lad. And then my eyes travel further—into books and into the past—and I see the yeomen cricketers of Hambledon playing on Broadhalfpenny, while the crowd around cries out in the broadest Hampshire, ‘ Tich and turn, tich and turn,’ or watch Masefield’s Robin Dawe galloping across the Berkshire meadows :

So in Dawe’s face what met the eye
Was only part ; what lay behind
Was English character and mind,
Great kindness, delicate sweet feeling
(Most shy, most clever in concealing
Its depth) for beauty of all sorts,
Great manliness and love of sports.
A grave, wise thoughtfulness and truth,
A merry fun outlasting youth,
A courage terrible to see
And mercy for his enemy.

And to close all, I find myself seated with George Borrow in old Tom of Bedford’s ‘ public ’ in Holborn way—Tom of Bedford, ‘ last and greatest of England’s bruisers . . . sharp as winter, kind as spring. . . . There sits the yeoman at the end of his long room, surrounded by his friends. Glasses are filled, and a song is the cry, and a song is sung well suited to the

LETTER V

BY LOWES DICKINSON

WHEN first I was brought into contact with the West what most immediately impressed me was the character and range of your intelligence. I found that you had brought your minds to bear, with singular success, upon problems which had not even occurred to us in the East ; that by analysis and experiment you had found the clue to the operation of the forces of Nature, and had turned them to account in ways which, to my untravelled imagination, appeared to be little short of miraculous. Nor has familiarity diminished my admiration for your achievements in this field. I recognise in them your chief and most substantial claim to superiority ; and I am not surprised that some of the more intelligent of my countrymen should be advocating with ardour their immediate introduction into China. I sympathize with the enthusiasm of these reformers ; but I am unable, nevertheless, to endorse their policy. And it may be worth while to set down here the reasons which have led me to a conclusion which may appear at first sight to be paradoxical.

The truth is that a study of your history during

the past century and a closer acquaintance with the structure of your society has considerably modified my original point of view. I have learnt that the most brilliant discoveries, the most fruitful applications of inventive genius, do not of themselves suffice for the well-being of society ; and that an intelligence which is concentrated exclusively on the production of labour-saving machines may easily work more harm by the dislocation of industry than it can accomplish good by the increase of wealth. For the increase of wealth—that is, of the means to comfort—is not, to my mind, necessarily good in itself ; everything depends on the way in which the wealth is distributed and on its effect on the moral character of the nation. And it is from that point of view that I look with some dismay upon the prospect of the introduction of Western methods into China. An example will best explain my point. When we began to construct our first railway, from Tientsin to Peking, the undertaking excited among the neighbouring populace an opposition which quickly developed into open riot. The line was torn up, bridges were destroyed, and it was impossible to continue the work. We therefore, according to our custom in China, sent down to the scene of action, not a force of police, but an official to interview the rioters and ascertain their point of view. It was as usual a perfectly reasonable one. They were a boating population, subsisting by the traffic of the canal, and

they feared that the railway would deprive them of their means of livelihood. The Government recognised the justice of their plea ; they gave the required guarantee that the traffic by water should not seriously suffer, and there was no further trouble or disturbance. The episode is a good illustration of the way in which we regard these questions. Englishmen to whom I have spoken of the matter have invariably listened to my account with astonishment not unmingled with indignation. To them it seems a monstrous thing that Government should pay any regard whatever to such representations on the part of the people. They speak of the laws of supply and demand, of the ultimate absorption of labour, of competition, progress, mobility and the 'long-run.' To all this I listen with more or less comprehension and acquiescence ; but it cannot conceal from me the fact that the introduction of new methods means, at any rate for the moment, so much dislocation of labour, so much poverty, suffering and starvation. Of this your own industrial history gives abundant proof. And I cannot but note with regret and disappointment that in all these years during which you have been perfecting the mechanical arts you have not apparently even attempted, you certainly have not attempted with success, to devise any means to obviate the disturbance and distress to which you have subjected your labouring population. This, indeed, is not

surprising, for it is your custom to subordinate life to wealth ; but neither, to a Chinaman, is it encouraging ; and I, at least, cannot contemplate without the gravest apprehension the disorders which must inevitably ensue among our population of four hundred millions upon the introduction, on a large scale, of Western methods of industry. You will say that the disorder is temporary ; to me it appears, in the West, to be chronic. But putting that aside, what, I may ask, are we to gain ? The gain to you is palpable ; so, I think, is the loss to us. But where is our gain ? The question, perhaps, may seem to you irrelevant ; but a Chinaman may be forgiven for thinking it important. You will answer, no doubt, that we shall gain wealth. Perhaps we shall ; but shall we not lose life ? Shall we not become like you ? And can you expect us to contemplate that with equanimity ? What are your advantages ? Your people, no doubt, are better equipped than ours with some of the less important goods of life ; they eat more, drink more, sleep more ; but there their superiority ends. They are less cheerful, less contented, less industrious, less law-abiding ; their occupations are more unhealthy both for body and mind ; they are crowded into cities and factories, divorced from Nature and the ownership of the soil. On all this I have already dwelt at length ; I only recur to it here in explanation of a position which may appear to you to be

perverse—the position of one who, while genuinely admiring the products of Western intelligence, yet doubts whether that intelligence has not been misapplied, or at least whether its direction has not been so one-sided that it is likely to have been productive of as much harm as good. You may, indeed—and I trust you will—rectify this error and show yourselves as ingenious in organizing men as you have been in dominating Nature. But meantime we may, perhaps, be pardoned if even when we most admire we yet hesitate to adopt your Western methods, and feel that the advantages which might possibly ensue will be dearly bought by the disorders that have everywhere accompanied their introduction.

And there is another point which weighs with me, one less obvious, perhaps, but not less important. In any society it must always be the case that the mass of men are absorbed in mechanical labours. It is so in ours no less, though certainly no more, than in yours ; and, so far, this condition does not appear to have been affected by the introduction of machinery. But, on the other hand, in every society there are, or should be, men who are relieved from this servitude to matter and free to devote themselves to higher ends. In China, for many centuries past, there has been a class of men set apart from the first to the pursuit of liberal arts, and destined to the functions of government. These men form no

close hereditary caste ; it is open to anyone to join them who possesses the requisite talent and inclination : and in this respect our society has long been the most democratic in the world. The education to which we subject this official class is a matter of frequent and adverse comment among you, and it is not my intention here to undertake its defence. What I wish to point out is the fact that, by virtue of this institution, we have inculcated and we maintain among our people of all classes a respect for the things of the mind and of the spirit, to which it would be hard to find a parallel in Europe, and of which, in particular, there is no trace in England. In China letters are respected not merely to a degree but in a sense which must seem, I think, to you unintelligible and overstrained. But there is a reason for it. Our poets and literary men have taught their successors, for long generations, to look for good not in wealth, not in power, not in miscellaneous activity, but in a trained, a choice, an exquisite appreciation of the most simple and universal relations of life. To feel, and in order to feel to express, or at least to understand the expression of all that is lovely in Nature, of all that is poignant and sensitive in man, is to us in itself a sufficient end. A rose in a moonlit garden, the shadow of trees on the turf, almond bloom, scent of pine, the wine-cup and the guitar ; these and the pathos of life and death, the long embrace, the hand stretched out in

vain, the moment that glides for ever away, with its freight of music and light, into the shadow and hush of the haunted past, all that we have, all that eludes us, a bird on the wing, a perfume escaped on the gale—to all these things we are trained to respond, and the response is what we call literature. This we have ; this you cannot give us ; but this you may so easily take away. Amid the roar of looms it cannot be heard ; it cannot be seen in the smoke of factories : it is killed by the wear and the whirl of Western life. And when I look at your business men, the men whom you most admire ; when I see them hour after hour, day after day, year after year, toiling in the mill of their forced and undelighted labours ; when I see them importing the anxieties of the day into their scant and grudging leisure, and wearing themselves out less by toil than by carking and illiberal cares, I reflect, I confess, with satisfaction on the simpler routine of our ancient industry, and prize, above all your new and dangerous routes, the beaten track so familiar to our accustomed feet that we have leisure, even while we pace it, to turn our gaze up to the eternal stars.

From *Letters from John Chinaman.*

THE B. B. G.

BY HILAIRE BELLOC

MEN are so familiar with the 'Blind Beggars' Guild' and its sober but really beautiful uniform in our streets to-day that they take both for granted and hardly ask themselves how the great organization arose.

I have indeed heard children ask how it was that a lusty, bright-eyed young man striding down the street should be connected with such a name as the 'Blind Beggars' Guild'; but for all of us grown-ups the thing has become a matter of course like the Salvation Army. We never stop to think of the odd incongruity of the name.

Yet the story is fascinating. It is what I have heard Lord Atchamhurst call 'a romance of modern organization,' and again, Professor Boodle (now Warden of Burford) has called it in his work on *The Anglo-Saxon Spirit* (Beacon and Co. 17s. 6d.) 'a typical, perhaps the most typical, development of an Anglo-Saxon institution from a purely private to a semi-public function.'

Before telling the story in the briefest fashion, I must assure my readers that the proof of this article

has been submitted to Draga, Lady Pallington, for it would be an offence to the memory of one of our greatest public men if anything should appear of which he would have disapproved ; and none could be a better judge of Lord Pallington's fastidious honour than the noble Lady who comforted his declining years.

It was during the depression following upon the first great European war, that the late Lord Pallington (then plain Mr. Powke) found himself compelled, after a very disastrous speculation, to turn to some new field of industry. Having genius, his vision was intense rather than precise : he had no exact plan in his head. He was directed by a trifling accident towards what was to be the success of his life—and a thing of unspeakably greater advantage in his eyes—the foundation of a most beneficent national institution. He was turning over in his pocket some loose change (the jingling of which reminded him ironically that his total available capital was now reduced to £300), when he saw, at the corner of Paradise Gardens in Chelsea, a blind beggar, standing complete with eye-shield, tin mug, little dog and stick, and even the traditional placard hung by a string from his shoulders.

In one moment—how genius leaps where industry must crawl !—a plan arose full formed in his mind.

Mr. Powke first looked very carefully over the standing figure, the dog, the stick, the eye-shield,

the tin mug and the placard ; then without any hesitation he made his first investment in his new enterprise. He dropped one penny and a halfpenny into the tin mug.

His object in sacrificing the second coin was to call the Blind Beggar's particular attention by the double ring and also to notice whether the dropping of more than one coin appeared to the said B. B. a normal, or an abnormal, event. The thanks he received were purely conventional ; that gave him his first hint. It was clear that Blind Beggars were quite accustomed to receive several coins at a time. Their occupation was not unremunerative.

He passed on, turned the corner, so as not to be observed by those who might have noticed his act of charity (let alone by the Blind Beggar himself), cast about among the houses facing the Blind Beggar's pitch until he found one which had a window to let, almost exactly opposite the recipient of his recent bounty. He drew a chair up in front of the window, and watched the Blind Beggar through a pair of strong binoculars, hour after hour.

What command of detail have our modern captains of industry ! The future Lord Pallington sat like this without food or drink through all that noon and all the afternoon, noting with a pencil stroke each passer-by and putting a rapid cross against those foolish enough to drop coins into the little tin

mug. He was preparing the material for his statistics.

The light dwindled. The April night came on. The Blind Beggar did not budge, nor did Mr. Powke. He submitted, as must so often the creators of great undertakings in our modern time, to a trial of endurance. It was nearly nine o'clock before a necessity for food shifted the mendicant from his post, and he began to shuffle slowly westward through the now deserted street, tapping with his stick and nervously clutching at the string whereby his little dog led him along.

The moment the quarry moved the hound was afoot. Long before the B. B. had reached the end of the short street Mr. Powke was walking at a leisurely pace about fifty yards behind him. After perhaps half a mile of this slow progress they came to an open empty space, with railings standing on a broad stone base. The beggar made as though to sit down immediately under a street lamp, and Mr. Powke darted into the refuge of a portico from which he could see without being seen.

He saw the B. B. sit down with a gesture of great relief upon the broad stone shelf, warily lift his eye-shield, glance beneath it furtively to right and left and then, there being no one in sight, remove it, as also the placard ; he thrust both into the pocket of his shabby green coat. After that he turned out from the pocket on the opposite side the coins he

had accumulated and began counting them under the electric light above him. Mr. Powke noted that he divided them by shillings, and he carefully counted each shilling that was dropped back again. Now and then a piece of silver would appear and was set aside, when the whole had been put back into the pocket Mr. Powke had accounted for a little over £1 4s. All this done, the B. B. rose and went his way at a brisk pace towards some home of his, still further westward.

Two days were allowed to pass during each of which, from morning till night, Mr. Powke sat fixed at his window and marking every passer-by and every contributor to the Blind Beggar's cup. Upon the third, Mr. Powke approached the Blind Beggar and drew him into conversation. He learnt from him the amount of the small levy on condition of which the police allowed him the monopoly of this pitch and one or two other details which, true or false, the man was willing to advance.

The next step was to hire an assistant. For this purpose Mr. Powke laid his hand upon a man with whose past he was familiar, and whose loyalty he could therefore control. He purchased a binocular for him, set him to watch at the window and himself went out to seek other pastures.

He now deliberately chose for his second station a very different quarter of London, near the British Museum, found another Blind Beggar, took up a

post of observation (hired for a small tip from the foreman of a stables), and repeated the whole process. He set another watcher there next day, and he did it all over again a third time in Southwark, a fourth in Bethnal Green, a fifth in Hammersmith.

By this time he had accumulated a fairly representative chart of hours, receipts, proportion of donors to passers-by, etc., and he was ready to go forward. He drew up a report upon each of the original five stations, mapped out another five in other parts of the town, planting his watchers as usual and rapidly extending his operations.

Before the end of the year he had one hundred and three Blind Beggars upon his list, of whom twenty-seven were not really blind at all, of whom all but eight were at work before ten in the morning and all but seventeen were on duty till at least eight o'clock at night; only three, he found, made a break in the middle of the day for food, etc., etc. He had a full statistic for his next great advance.

This was to go from one B. B. to the other (acting each time under a different name), and profess friendship, and aid, with that sympathy which is so necessary when we approach the poor for their own good.

He began by charitably proposing to each of these one hundred and three men that they should be guaranteed a certain daily receipt, larger than that which they had confessed to obtaining by their own

efforts ; for he professed to be shocked to hear how little they managed to collect. I very much regret to say that they had all grossly understated their incomes, but those who have undertaken the hard work of uplift will not be surprised at the shocking disregard for truth in that class of society. Meanwhile, he was extending his operations and adding to his tables a second, a third and a fourth hundred, but as his capital was now drawing to an end, he did not extend it beyond a fifth hundred, which indeed covered the greater part of the Metropolis.

Furnished with a complete knowledge, not only of averages, but of detailed receipts, Mr. Powke next undertook the really delicate operation known in higher financial circles as 'the Double Cross.' He satisfied the police. This done, he played the master stroke and gathered in the whole.

Each B. B. was individually informed that his malfeasance was now known, his true earnings counted, and his false statements upon them exposed. Those who were not really blind were given indisputable proof that their cheat was in the hands of a powerful agent. Each statement of receipt was compared with the real average income. In many cases restitution was demanded and was of course unobtainable. Those wicked men who had imagined themselves to be safely fleecing gullible charity sought each his particular policeman—but in vain. The police turned a deaf ear to such appeals, and

threatened the B. B.'s with the immediate loss of their pitches if they showed any incompatibility of temper.

After this action, Mr. Powke had all the Blind Beggars of London, real and apparent, in his hand, and was already known among his intimates at the Babylon Bar as 'The Blind Beggar King.' His original capital had been by this time replenished from his rightful demands upon the miserable beings who had attempted to deceive him, but to whom he deigned to return good for evil. Five hundred Blind Beggars at an average of 10s. each a week gave him an ample income with which to proceed. He provided for articles to appear in the Press denouncing the growth of mendicancy since the war, and urging the necessity for its organization. He gave the Blind Beggars pamphlets for distribution, assuring the charitable that accounts were now audited and that a Guild had been formed for protecting their interests, so that no donation could be wasted upon an unworthy object. As his income grew, he obtained the services of Sir Archibald Glass, R.A., to design a sober but striking uniform with the letters 'B. B. G.' modestly inscribed in blue upon the lapels of the coat. Lord Lackyer, O.M., the president of the Royal Academy, painted a fine poster, to which the Bishop of Wembley supplied the touching motto 'Inasmuch.' For the small fee of 50s. Mr. Powke acquired a ringing piece

of verse from the noblest and most widely read of our great modern poets, Charles Hagley, which he distributed as an advertisement of his Christ-like efforts. It was set to music by Miss Masham upon a royalty basis and sung as a devotional *Morceau* in many a sacred edifice.

Thus gradually, and by careful, modest, unobtrusive steps, was the great affair built up. Londoners grew familiar with the letters 'B. B. G.', the patented symbol of a Red Square, the Poster, the Hymn. They came to know as part of their daily walks in the streets the uniform which guaranteed the control of those who received charity and the proper auditing of donations. Indeed the auditing was conducted by Mr. Powke's own nephew, the name of whose firm stood second to none for integrity. A few abandoned creatures who attempted to imitate the uniform and beg on their own were dealt with severely by the magistrates, who rightly pointed out the special wickedness of such an offence in view of the institution everywhere at work for the public good.

Sir Henry Powke (as he now became in the first Birthday Honours List following upon the second Great War) had long gathered into his magnificent organization other forms of mendicancy, and, I am glad to say, many of the smaller trades as well, which if they cannot properly be called mendicant, are at least precarious : such as the retail sale of